THE IDEAL OF THE PRIESTHOOD

EHRENBORG-GEREIN

270.05
C 632

THE IDEAL OF THE PRIESTHOOD

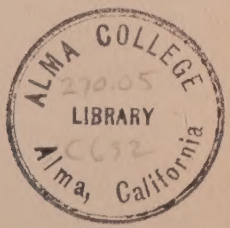
As Illustrated by the Life of
JOHN COASSINI,
of the German-Hungarian College in Rome

By

The Rev. FERDINAND EHRENBORG, S.J.

Adapted into English by

The Rev. FRANK GEREIN



B. HERDER BOOK CO.
15 & 17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.
AND
33 QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON, W. C.
1930

17089

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Printed in U. S. A.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 18. Dec., 1929,

Joannes Rothensteiner,

Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 20. Dec., 1929,

✠ *Joannes Glennon,*

Archiepiscopus

Copyright 1930

BY B. HERDER BOOK CO.

Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., Binghamton and New York

PREFACE

John Coassini was a model young cleric of the German-Hungarian College in Rome. He had been a priest only seven weeks when a sudden illness seized him and extinguished his promising young life. His death was so touching that not only all who were in the College were edified by it, but the news even penetrated to the Holy Father, who sent the dying priest his Apostolic Blessing and after his death expressed warm sympathy to the College.

The wide-spread desire of learning the details of his pious life inspired this biographical sketch, which is now presented to a larger public because it shows by a concrete example how, even in our day, with the graces accessible to all, great virtue and perfection can be attained.

This book does not present extraordinary deeds or visions, but simply portrays the character development of a noble youth who overcame the common weaknesses and imperfections of human nature and acquired true priestly virtue and knowledge in the pale of a great modern university.

The principal traits of the picture are drawn from Coassini's own notes. It was his custom to write down

his resolutions and inspirations and to record his progress and the obstacles with which he had to contend. On his deathbed he placed all this material at the free disposal of the author, who had been his spiritual director during his college and university life. These notes, planned and executed with no thought of publication, admit us to the inner sanctuary of his heart and allow us to follow his psychological development. We see how he regarded the ideal of the priesthood and how he strove to reach it.

The testimony of numerous witnesses—professors, superiors, pupils and fellow-students with whom he came in daily contact—completes the portrayal and shows how he gradually realized his exalted ideal.

Owing to the fertility of the sources, it has been possible to depict him in almost all situations of life, at school, during vacation time and on excursions; in daily prayer and work as on feasts and festivities; in the preparation for a holy life, in mourning and temptation as in fruitful activity and encouraging results. Thus, this portrait may serve to encourage and stimulate not only those who have the ideal of the priesthood constantly before their eyes, but also those who in any state of life earnestly strive to acquire virtue, particularly the young.

THE AUTHOR

CONTENTS

		PAGE
PREFACE	. . . . .	iii
CHAPTER		
I	YOUTH AND EARLY LIFE (1887–1906) . .	1
II	ARRIVAL IN ROME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINARY LIFE (1906)	8
III	COASSINI AS A STUDENT OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY (1906–1909) .	14
IV	THE FOUNDATION OF A CHARACTER . . .	19
V	LIFE IN THE HOLY CITY	28
VI	INTERIOR STRUGGLES	39
VII	TONSURE AND MINOR ORDERS	47
VIII	IN THE SERVICE OF FRATERNAL CHARITY . .	55
IX	COASSINI AS A CATECHIST IN SUNDAY SCHOOL .	63
X	A DAY IN THE COLLEGIUM GERMANICUM . .	72
XI	FEASTS AND HOLIDAYS	93
XII	SEVERE TRIALS	104
XIII	A FRIEND OF THE SAINTS	108
XIV	FAVORITE DEVOTIONS	120
XV	VACATIONS AT SAN PASTORE	131
XVI	THEOLOGICAL STUDIES (1909–1912) . . .	141
XVII	COASSINI AS DIRECTOR OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL .	157

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVIII	Coassini as Subdeacon	167
XIX	Coassini as Deacon	182
XX	Coassini as Prefect of the Theologians (1912)	191
XXI	Immediate Preparation for the Priesthood	201
XXII	Coassini's Ordination and First Mass (1912)	216
XXIII	Coassini's Seven Weeks as a Priest	226
XXIV	Coassini's Illness and Death	237
XXV	Sympathy and Appreciation	264
XXVI	A Character Sketch of Coassini	271

CHAPTER I

YOUTH AND EARLY LIFE (1887–1906)

1. John's Birth and Family.—2. Death of his Mother.—3. His First Confession and Communion.—4. In the Public School.—5. In the Grammar School.—6. Choice of a Vocation.

1. John Coassini first saw the light of day on the 5th of September, 1887, in Gradisca, a magnificent little town on the right bank of the Isonzo River. In Holy Baptism he received the names: John Peter Hugh. His father, Nicholas, a chemist and wealthy landed proprietor, rejoiced greatly over the birth of this boy, for his oldest son had died and the only other child was a daughter. His mother, Angela, *née* Basilisco, who already felt the germs of a mortal illness within her body, endeavored to instill into the heart of her child sentiments of true piety at an early age. Since the paternal home was situated next to the church, she often took little John with her to the altar of the Sorrowful Mother, in order to arouse in his childish heart a deep love for the Redeemer and the Blessed Eucharist together with respect and confidence in Mary. Thus, John early learned to pray and soon manifested pleasure in the service of God.

The "Stabat Mater" was frequently sung in church. At the age of four he knew the entire hymn by heart and when playing at home, he often accompanied his games in a clear sonorous voice with: "*Stabat Mater dolorosa.*"

2. His mother, through a certain presentiment, had early directed him to the Heavenly Mother, for she was soon to leave him. On May 5th, 1892, when John was not yet five years of age, she was called away. Her death was concealed from him, and for several days every evening before bed-time he still recited a "Hail Mary" for the recovery of his mother, which moved his father to tears. But after a while he could no longer control his yearning for his mother and secretly stole into her room to greet her. When he did not find her there, he called loudly: "Mamma, Mamma," and in an apprehensive voice asked his aunt who just entered the room: "Where is my mother?" The aunt answered: "Your mother is in Paradise." He asked if she were dead, and began to weep bitterly. But he soon controlled himself and said: "Mother lives in Paradise, doesn't she, Aunty? and one day I will see her there again."

On the Sunday following the death of John's mother, his aunt took the children out for a walk. It was market-day and there was public dancing. His sister, Maria, began to dance with the children on the lawn. John looked at her, but said nothing. But on the way home he earnestly remarked: "Maria, you are

thoughtless. Mother died only a few days ago, and now you begin to dance. Let us pray for her; the prayer of her children will benefit her." He never forgot to pray for his mother.

3. The day of his first confession was a great event in his young life, for which he prepared himself by a long and earnest examination of conscience. The night before he hardly slept on account of eager anticipation. He constantly repeated: "Father, I'll get up, it's time now." And if his father replied: "Sleep, child, the church is still locked," he would be quiet for a moment, but only to repeat his entreating question soon after. At the first sound of the Angelus bell, he jumped out of bed and hurried to church. After going to confession he came home beaming with joy.

Still more did this interior attraction to piety manifest itself when he received his first Communion. The parish priest who prepared him says that "unwittingly one was reminded of the holy Communion of St. Aloysius, whom he always honored in a special way, and asked oneself: Could Aloysius have done better?" After his first Communion, John's devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament increased rapidly and he often received and gladly visited Him under the hidden species.

4. John first attended school in his home town. His teacher, Joseph Falconer, who still lives, is full of praise for his zeal and noble behavior. "I never had

to punish, rebuke, or encourage John," he says, "he was a little saint; and always first in his class."

"I still remember," writes his sister, "how he loved to go to school and wanted to get up at daybreak every morning so as not to be late, so much so that father had great trouble in quieting him." Returning from school one day, John passed his aunt without greeting her. To the question: "Why don't you greet us?" he earnestly replied: "Do you think I have nothing more important to do than to greet you, Aunty?"

5. In his tenth year he left his paternal home in order to begin his classical studies in Trieste. His separation from home, particularly from his father, was very trying, but he did not betray his feelings.

In Trieste he attended the city college, which was entirely in the hands of Liberals and Jews, and at which there was no lack of bad example. Here, the world with all its temptations approached him and his college years were a severe school for the formation of his character. Canon Trevisan of Gorizia, former parish priest of Gradisca and a confidant of the family, who kindly gathered all the data concerning his youth and placed them at our disposal, remarks: "It is truly amazing how, in the midst of such surroundings, John was able to remain so pure and innocent." But he had the good fortune of finding a pious and learned spiritual director, from whom he learned how to avoid the dangers of bad company without being impolite. Guided by him, John frequented the

sacraments, prayed much, led a retired life, and diligently applied himself to his studies and music.

One evening, one of his relatives, who lived in the same house with him, noticed that, instead of retiring, John was still praying in his room. To the exhortation: "Go to bed, you are young and need rest," he replied: "All right!" and, taking his lamp, went into his study, as though to get something. As he remained there for some time, the relative looked and found him with folded hands, eyes raised to heaven, kneeling as though in an ecstasy, so that she did not dare disturb him, but allowed him to finish his devotion.

During vacation he always hurried home and rejoiced at seeing his father again. With the parish priest, who was a true guardian angel to the whole family, he discussed and ordered all his affairs. He was always busy and lived a life of retirement. Besides his studies and music, to which he applied himself with his sister, he occupied his time with painting, and his sister, now Mrs. M. Wenighofer, still possesses an oil painting produced by his hand, "in the truly beautiful execution of which," she says, "no one can recognize the work of an untrained child."

He always brought home excellent testimonials of conduct and diligence. His father wished to reward his application and often asked him what he desired. "Nothing, father," was his answer. "You are doing enough for me, and I am glad you are satisfied with me." Only once he asked him to purchase for him a

copy of a certain dictionary which had just appeared on the market.

When asked why he was so obedient and prayed so much, he would answer: "We all have our weaknesses, and therefore need prayer."

When he heard someone curse, he would pray almost the whole day that God might pardon the poor sinner.

6. After John had finished his classics, he was confronted with more difficult studies. The question of choosing a vocation, or, more correctly, the question of winning his father's approval of the vocation which he had already chosen, came up.

His father had placed all his hope on his only son, whom he wished to study medicine at the university. He had already on frequent occasions revealed this wish to his son, without ever obtaining the latter's assent.

How great, therefore, his disappointment and displeasure must have been when John told him that he was firmly decided to study theology in order to serve God in the priesthood. His father, his aunt, and his other relatives did all they could to make him change his decision, and requested others, even priests and religious, to dissuade him from his purpose. John had long felt the call to leave the world and to consecrate himself entirely to the service of God. He had prayed much, meditated earnestly, and consulted his confessor, and hence his decision was irrevocable.

He remained firm, prayed and entreated, till his father finally gave his consent. John went to Rome and there entered the German-Hungarian College to study philosophy and theology. His father and his sister accompanied him thither.

Since John had not yet been confirmed, he wished to receive this Sacrament before his departure for Rome, and desired the parish priest to be his sponsor. This day of joy increased his love, confidence, and reverence towards his pastor, whom he regarded as his second father and in whom he retained an extraordinary confidence during his whole life.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL IN ROME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINARY LIFE (1906)

1. John's First Appearance in Rome.—2. Clothed in the Red Cassock.—3. The Academy.—4. First Audience with Pius X.

1. John Coassini, accompanied by his father and sister, arrived in Rome October 28th, 1906. After he had lodged both in an inn, he repaired to the Germanicum. A student received him, conducted him to the Rector and the Father Spiritual, and then, after a light collation, took him to his room and introduced him to the other newcomers. Perfectly satisfied, he informed his loved ones the next morning: "You can return home without worry; I have received a large room facing south-east in the former hotel Costanzi, from which I have a lovely view of the relatively large courtyard of the College and the barracks of the cuirassiers. The food is good. The friendliness of the superiors and the geniality of the students exceed all praise. There is no lack of variety among a hundred young men." [1] His contentment rendered

[1] The Germanicum is a central institute for students of theology from Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland. It was founded

the separation somewhat less painful for his father.

John joined the fourteen other new students in order to become acquainted with a goodly portion of the Eternal City during the few remaining days of vacation.

He still wore his civilian clothes. "They seemed to have a mark of modesty and festivity and seemed to harmonize perfectly with his cheerful exterior and his happy, innocent eyes," one of his fellow-students tells us. "His whole being was reserved rather than communicative during those first days. One afternoon, we newcomers went to Santa Maria Maggiore. Coassini was my companion. The conversation sometimes lagged, and while I restrained my impatience with difficulty, a quiet smile surrounded his lips and never left his face."

2. On October 31, Coassini was introduced to the

by Julius III through St. Ignatius Loyola, in 1552. Gregory XIII established 100 free scholarships, which during the succeeding centuries were reduced to about one-half, so that the number of those who study at their own cost (convictores) almost equals the number of those who have the use of a stipend or half stipend (alumni). The seat of the College, which for many years was the "Apollinare," was not restored during the restoration of 1818, and thus, when the Palazzo Borromeo became too small, the Hotel Costanzi on the Via S. Nicola da Tolentino 8, was bought, so that the students now live in lovely hotel rooms. Whoever is interested in the College is referred to the exhaustive work of Cardinal Steinhuber, who was himself an alumnus of the institution and its rector for thirteen years: *Geschichte des Collegium Germanicum Hungaricum in Rom*, 2nd ed., 2 vol., Freiburg, Herder, 1906. A brief summary is presented in the biography of the first student of the College to be beatified, Blessed Robert Johnson. Hettinger (*Aus Welt und Kirche*, Vol. I) gives a pleasant and colorful picture of life in the College in his student days.

spiritual life of the College. In virtue of a long established tradition, the Feast of All Saints is entrance day at the College, when the new students lay aside their civilian clothes and put on the red cassock introduced by St. Ignatius. In a brief address they are reminded of the significance of this change.

"To put away the old man and in its place to adorn myself entirely with the spirit of Christ, whose dignity I am to share in the priesthood, that is my work for the coming years," he thought as he weighed the words of the bishop. "My habit reminds me of that. I wear it every day, that I may never forget this duty. Its red color reminds me of the blood of the martyrs, who heroically sacrificed everything for Christ. It points to the red of the feast of Pentecost, in whose strength I shall be renewed and in whose language I shall speak. It reminds me of the purple of the Cardinals, who stand in an especially close relation to the Church and the Holy See. May the sight of the habit during my seminary period increase my love for Christ to such a degree that I may have the zeal of the Martyrs, purify my courage with the force of the Holy Ghost and be united in the firmest bond of fidelity with the Church and the Holy See." His wish was destined to be fulfilled.

On the morning of All Saints, he made his meditation on the majesty and dignity of the priesthood, which, in the brilliance of this day of a first mass and of the feast of All Saints, impressed him deeply. For

the first time he received holy Communion in the red habit from the hands of a newly ordained priest.

After breakfast, he was introduced to the Fathers, who encouraged him in his new vocation. Then all repaired to the aula, where the students of the philosophical course had assembled. After the "*Laudate Dominum*" had been enthusiastically sung, the usual greeting and happy conversation followed. When John reached his room, a little surprise awaited him. Every student had brought him a picture inscribed with a proverb or verse as a souvenir, so that table, bed, and chair were covered with them.

At the High Mass, which was likewise sung by a newly ordained priest, John for the first time heard the choir of the Germanicum sing the solemn liturgical chant. One of his companions wrote in his diary: "The words '*Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam,*' touched my heart, because the centre of all Christianity is here in Rome."

At noon, the splendidly decorated dining-room as well as the numerous invited guests who adorned the first places together with the nineteen newly ordained priests, soon produced a spirit proper to the feast. Enthusiastic speeches and numerous telegrams of greeting sent by bishops and former students increased the festive joy. During the banquet, Coassini, as a musician, interestedly followed the music, which was skilfully executed.

Then all were presented to Cardinal Steinhuber,

who lived in the building and who, despite his 82 years, still revealed a truly virile energy. He conversed with everyone and at hearing the name Coassini immediately asked whether John was an Italian.

Father Wernz, the General of the Jesuits, who likewise resided in the College, had some fatherly advice and a warm word for everyone.

3. The day closed with a celebration in honor of the Sacred Heart, at which appropriate pieces in verse were produced and a "solo choir" of seven voices sang.

On the following day, All Souls, after the solemn Mass of Requiem, Coassini with the other students visited the Cemetery of S. Lorenzo to view the decoration of the graves and to remember the dear dead of his home.

On the 4th of November Coassini had the good fortune of receiving the Apostolic Benediction for his studies. One of his fellow-students describes their audience in the Vatican as follows: "We ascend the marble stairs erected by Pius IX and, after passing through two halls, wait in the little reception room. There we stand in a sort of semicircle—the new students of the Germanicum and the newly-ordained priests with their relatives. We wait for some time; then four papal guards appear and a majestic form in a white habit. We kneel down. The Holy Father goes from one to the other, extends his hand, and permits each to kiss his ring. In a powerful voice he

spoke a few words to us in Italian, which I did not understand; then, in Latin, he said, in substance: "Apply yourselves to the acquisition of knowledge, but still more to the cultivation of piety. Piety is the foundation of the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom." Then he gave the Apostolic Blessing to all.

CHAPTER III

COASSINI AS A STUDENT OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY (1906-1909)

1. Demands of the University.—2. Coassini's Method of Study.—3. Success in his Studies.

1. The days of introduction being over, the daily work began. The students of the German College attend the lectures at the Gregorian University. On November 3, the new scholastic year began with a solemn High Mass in honor of the Holy Ghost in the near-by Church of St. Ignatius.

Coassini was well prepared for the higher courses. The curriculum had just recently been revised and adapted to the demands of the time and authoritatively approved by the General of the Society of Jesus, Father Wernz. Henceforth, all students were to follow the entire three-year course in philosophy, which ends with the doctorate, "that they might be familiar with the sound principles of Scholastic Philosophy, which are so necessary to combat errors and which should become a second nature to them, as it were."

Coassini studied logic, epistemology, and ontology the first, cosmology and psychology the second, and moral philosophy and theodicy the third year. Besides he took the entire course of natural sciences—physics, chemistry, biology, experimental psychology, astronomy—history of art and history of philosophy. Just at this period a remarkable change had set in in favor of natural science.

Coassini was a careful and diligent student who found evident encouragement in the rule approved by Gregory XIII, the second founder of the Germanicum, which says: "The students shall aim above all at cultivating piety, but they shall also devote themselves entirely to the prescribed studies, setting aside all other work and worldly affairs."

This remained the dominant thought of Coassini, to which he later added the warning of Pius X in the motu proprio "*Sanctorum Antistitum,*" of Sept. 1, 1910, that it is false to hold that the seminaries are designed to cultivate either piety or science exclusively. They should cultivate both. That a well-trained clergy may be produced by them, two things are absolutely necessary: knowledge for the development of reason and virtue for the perfection of the soul.

2. Accordingly, study was his duty and life-work, and all his studies were grouped around the lectures delivered at the University: "In my studies I must always keep step with the lectures, prepare myself for them beforehand, afterwards question myself about

them, and all this in such a way that no question of importance escapes me." Never was he seen idle or occupied with other things during a lecture; no matter how difficult the matter, how tedious the lecture, or how depressing the heat, he never for a moment ceased paying attention to the professor. "In my studies I must persevere and work hard in order to make the greatest possible progress for the benefit of the Church and the greater glory of God." In these words he had made a resolution to which he adhered amidst the greatest difficulties. He always listened to the lectures with pen in hand, either writing down the entire lecture—he was possessed of great skill in this—or, if the professor gave his pupils a synopsis on printed sheets, facilitating the understanding and subsequent repetition of the matter at least by brief notes. He himself remarks in his notes that "it is very useful always to work with pen in hand." At home, he went through all the matter thoroughly and prepared a concise, clear, and synoptical outline of each course. To this day the fifteen neatly written copy-books in which he had summarized the course of philosophy, reveal the zeal and intelligence of the young student.

In spite of this diligence, he was a lively, jovial student who did not overlook the little peculiarities of his professors. Thus, one professor used certain gestures to manifest his doubts concerning the views of his opponents. John always took real pleasure in

these gestures and whenever he was too busy writing, his neighbors never neglected to draw his attention to the spectacle which he enjoyed so much. Occasionally, in conversation, he imitated those gestures of the professor for the amusement of his fellow-students.

The brief recesses at the university he improved to study the Slovenian tongue, Hebrew, and the exegesis of the Psalms. So zealously did he devote himself to his studies that his superiors were forced to restrain his zeal and he himself made a resolution not to overexert himself.

In philosophy he was particularly attracted by ethics and natural theology, which two branches not only synopsize the whole of philosophy, but also lead to theology, the science proper to the priestly vocation.

3. While he was in his second year of philosophy, his professor in February, 1908, selected him for a public disputation on subjects dealt with in cosmology. The Gregorian University holds solemn disputations of this kind in the presence of the entire faculty three times a year. Like the weekly disputations, these public debates have a double end, first, to deepen the knowledge of the student, and, secondly, to accustom him to appear in public. The defender receives his theses, ten or more, a month beforehand and must defend them before the whole faculty against four opponents. The professor takes up his position near the defender, in order to help him, not only against

his opponents, but also against the other professors if they take a hand in the disputation, as frequently happens.

Promptly and ably did Coassini acquit himself of this task on that occasion. Besides his cleverness and knowledge, his humble modesty was particularly pleasing, and won for him the good-will and confidence alike of his superiors and fellow-students.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, towards the end of the philosophical course, Coassini was honored by being chosen defender in the doctoral examination held in the presence of the whole university. He modestly refused the honor, giving as his reason that the day of the public examination was too close and he wished to prepare himself for his doctorate at ease.

Coassini passed his doctoral examination with distinction, as was to have been expected.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOUNDATION OF A CHARACTER

1. Settling With the Past.—2. Planning for the Future.—3. Faithful Execution of Resolutions.

But the acquisition of knowledge was not the principal aim of Coassini. He esteemed character training still more highly and began this work in a systematic way during his first retreat, which he made between Christmas and New Year's. He had already familiarized himself somewhat with the practice of making meditations, and acquired an idea of the difficulties of the spiritual life.

1. One of the principal aims of the first retreat is to make a thorough settlement with the past: "*Expurgate vetus fermentum, ut sitis nova conspersio.*" Coassini honestly and earnestly put his entire past in order before God and His representatives. His resolution, which he set down in large letters, was "a sincere general confession." It was carried out so faithfully that on his deathbed, when he knew the end was near, not the slightest alarm over his past arose in his soul. He had underlined the words: "I will extinguish my sins in the retreat," and had carried out this resolution faithfully.

Another resolution was: "I promise my Redeemer to sin no more and resolve to retain this horror for sin always, especially in the hour of temptation." This resolution, too, he had so deeply engraved in his heart that we can confidently say he had entirely broken with wilful sin, venial as well as mortal. This particular resolution occurs twice in his notes, and is underscored both times: "I resolve to sin no more. In the name of the infinite mercy of God, no more sin! I firmly resolve ever to keep before my eyes this horror of sin."

The thought of the eternal truths, especially the thought of death, were utilized to deter him from sin. "Death," he said, "must come sooner or later; it may come when I least expect it, perhaps in a short time; therefore (and he writes the following words in large letters in the middle of the line):

"ESTOTE PARATI" (Be prepared)!

2. The second great purpose of the first retreat is perhaps still more important. It is to order one's whole future life according to definite principles and to eliminate from study and character training all uncertainty and chance.

Coassini made it his special aim in the Germanicum to acquire a firm character which neither temptation nor difficulty, neither external influence nor ordinary relaxation, might weaken; a character by no means proud and stiff, but elastic and flexible, yet methodical and energetic. He wished to acquire such a character

by his own personal efforts, independently, but in close contact with his spiritual director, to whom he revealed all his resolutions, in order that youthful enthusiasm and inexperience might not lead him astray.

He cast his eyes upon the Redeemer in Nazareth as the noblest of all characters. How did the Son of man train Himself? Thirty years He lived in retirement, following a sound and simple rule, working and praying, subject to His parents and increasing in wisdom and grace before God and men. Thus also did John Coassini wish to lead a retired, laborious life in the Collegium Germanicum, so as to become a pious, a learned, and a kind priest of firm character.

His resolutions are embodied in a series of questions on which he examined himself every Sunday after Communion.

I. A Pious Priest

1. Has my hatred for sin diminished? Am I still firmly resolved to commit no voluntary sin? Did I fail? Was I in danger?

2. Did I punctually observe all spiritual exercises? Did I carry them through earnestly? Did I shorten any of them?

a) Did I prepare conscientiously for meditation? Did I earnestly carry it through? Did I make any notes?

b) What method did I follow in utilizing Mass and Communion?

3) Did I carefully examine my conscience when going to

confession? Did I have true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment? Was my confession sincere and complete?

d) Did I recollect myself before beginning vocal prayer? Did I resist distractions quietly but earnestly? Did I take a dignified posture at prayer?

e) Did I go through all the points in examining my conscience? Did I make any notes?

f) Did I profit by my private devotions? To the Sacred Heart? To the Blessed Virgin Mary? Visits to the Blessed Sacrament? Beads? Way of the Cross? Ejaculatory prayers?

g) Did I engage in spiritual reading daily? At a fixed hour?

h) Did I read Holy Scripture attentively? With due respect? Kneeling?

II. A Learned Priest

1. Did I study diligently? With the right intention? Not according to inclination, but with perseverance? Did I lose courage? Did I pray in meeting with difficulties?

2. Did I pay proper attention to my class-work? Listen to the lectures attentively? Prepare for them carefully? How much time did I devote to non-essential work? How many minutes did I lose?

III. A Priest of Firm Character

1. Did I earnestly work at my spiritual progress? Did I oppose my principal fault? Which was it?

2. Was I humble? Did I admire my work or belittle that of others? Did I brag of my accomplishments?

3. Did I practice mortification in eating? In enjoying the comforts of life?

4. Did I watch over my imagination? Did I bridle my inclinations? Restrain my eyes?

5. Was I conscientious in observing the order of the day and the rules of the institution?

IV. A Kindly Priest (*urbanitas*)

1. Was I respectful towards my superiors? Frank and honest? Or critical and dissatisfied? Did I allow myself to be entirely directed by faith and charity?

2. Was I friendly towards my companions? Ready to help? The same towards all? Did I insist on having my own way? Was I harsh, blunt, gruff? Harsh in judging others? Did I sin by talking about others?

3. Did I always give a good example to all? Did I try to make others happy by sympathy, ennobling conversation, prepared to do them little services, particularly those of an unpleasant character?

4. On what points must I particularly watch over myself in future?

My principal end: To progress in piety and in my studies, but particularly in humility.

The principal means to attain this end: Interior mortification with the help of the particular examination of conscience; a retired life in obedience and prayer.

In each succeeding retreat this plan of work was completed, perfected, and altered, so as to serve as a norm for the following year. For the sake of comparison we will here give the one he formulated when he began to study theology:

I. My Relations With God

a) Meditation. I will guard myself against negligence in observing the rules of meditation. I will prepare a plan for passing the day well.

b) Holy Mass and Communion. I will endeavor to make my preparation during holy Mass and my thanksgiving with great care, paying more attention to interior devotion than to the choice of words, and in my colloquies with Jesus I will present all that which lies closest to my heart. I will try to draw the greatest possible profit from Holy Communion, so as to make progress in the virtues which I need most. I will also strive to begin my preparation the evening before and to continue it all through the morning hours.

c) Visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Once every morning on returning from class, and once each evening on the same occasion, I will visit my Redeemer; also, if all goes well, after breakfast. On these occasions I will evoke acts proper to the circumstances and renew my resolutions, meanwhile casting a glance over the past and preparing for the future. I will recite a few convenient prayers.

d) Oral prayer. I will recite the beads daily, on school-days on the way to class, on other days at a convenient time. I will pray before beginning my studies in the morning and whenever I return to my room during the day.

e) Particular Examination of Conscience. I will examine my conscience on whatever bears a relation to the mortification of self-love. Twice a day I will make a brief notation: once (if an opportunity presents itself) before dinner, and again in the evening at the time of the principal examination, in the course of which I will devote special attention to contrition and a firm purpose of amendment.

f) Mortification. Every day, at dinner and supper, I will perform some little act of mortification; also in special circumstances (*e. g.*, in rainy weather, cold, heat, etc.). To subdue my gloomy and melancholy disposition shall be a special mortification for me.

II. Relations With Superiors

a) In all that regards their duties, I will strive to comply with the wishes of my superiors.

b) I will with equanimity submit my judgement to that of anyone who has the right to command me.

III. Relations With Fellow-Students

I will be very careful to practice brotherly love, particularly after the intention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I will be ever ready to serve my fellow-students, even if I must forget myself in so doing. I will be equally friendly towards all and endeavor to overcome all special inclinations towards particular persons. During recreations and walks, and on all similar occasions, I will be amiable and friendly towards any companion who may be designated for me. If this is difficult, I will strive to overcome myself. In conversation I will try to talk of useful things (something edifying or concerning our studies); I will guard against useless or foolish remarks. I will share in the difficulties and troubles of others, especially through prayer.

IV. Studies

a) Obligatory Studies. I will work at these in a particular way on class-days, but also, if necessity demands, on days when there is no class. I will always prepare myself

and keep step with the school in all class work. I will endeavor never to break up my study hours without necessity; the longer periods (especially in the evening) I will devote to the study of dogma. I will prepare for the repetitions. I will go to the library only when it is necessary.

b) Free Studies. I will exactly determine what I will and should do so as to make real progress in these without detriment to my obligatory studies. I will improve the days when there is no school (unless necessary studies are urgent) and if any time remains, utilize specified periods on ordinary school days.

V. Catechism Classes for Children

I will co-operate from a motive of charity. I will try to study the matter for these instructions ever better and better, and seek advice when in doubt. For preparation, I will especially use free days or hours of slight importance, or certain periods which may help to interrupt studies of longer duration. I will energetically insist that everything be performed at the proper time and manner by all.

3. That was the plan he drew up, which, according to his notes, was to be "an integral part of my preparation for the priesthood." But it is a long and difficult way from the will to the act, from the plan to the completed structure. Coassini did not shrink from the labor involved. Every Sunday, after receiving Communion, he reviewed this plan in the quiet of his room, and after praying to the Holy Ghost, diligently went through it point for point in order to give his Redeemer an account of himself. By means of the

little note-book in which he regularly made his remarks, we can follow his progress. With one exception he never omitted these entries,—which is certainly a proof of sincere and upright endeavor.

His fellow-students likewise bear witness that he worked honestly and conscientiously to keep his resolutions day by day, and that he performed all his duties with punctuality and with unfailing charity and good humor.

His exterior reserve and modesty were particularly striking. And yet, during his second-last retreat, he wrote: "I resolve to cultivate exterior modesty still more." If the perfection which he had attained in this virtue did not satisfy him, what degree must he already have reached in those virtues of which he no longer speaks?

Nor was he to remain immune from interior trials. But before we speak of these, let us view Coassini in the environment which contributed so much to the formation of his character.

CHAPTER V

LIFE IN THE HOLY CITY

1. General Impressions.—2. Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of Pius IX.—3. Beatifications and Canonizations.—4. Stimulating Visits.—5. College Festivities.

1. Coassini loved Rome. "I must make good use of the exceptional privilege of being able to prepare myself for the priesthood in Rome, draw enthusiasm from the memorials of Christian antiquity, and thereby rekindle my love for the Holy See and marvel at the wonderful Providence manifested in the guidance of the Church." In these words he portrays some of the advantages which study in Rome confers.

Rome, that huge heap of ruins of ancient glory; Rome, the city of the saints and martyrs, with her monuments above and beneath the earth; Rome, the centre of pagan and Christian art in her churches and galleries; Rome, the pivot of all Christian life with its canonizations and beatifications, its jubilees and centenaries; Rome, the eternal city with the Vicar of Christ and the central administration of the Church, whither the faithful of all lands hasten in mighty pilgrim groups, where bishops from even the most

distant dioceses seek encouragement and direction at specified times: this great city contributed much to the formation of John Coassini.

We will not now accompany him to the Forum, or to the basilicas, Catacombs, and museums, as we shall have an opportunity to do so later on. Nor will we here consider the powerful influence which the examples of the saints exerted upon him. He himself speaks of it thus: "St. Aloysius came to Rome in order to acquire the true apostolic spirit in his Order; why should not I also be able to acquire it, since I am placed in similarly favorable circumstances?" Let us rather confine ourselves to the external ecclesiastical life of Rome with its feasts and festivities.

First of all come the festivities in the Vatican and in St. Peter's Basilica: solemn papal masses, solemn audiences, consistories, canonization and beatification solemnities. There is probably not a single kind of these ceremonies at which Coassini did not assist once or more than once, in spite of the fact that he frequently and gladly yielded his ticket to a fellow-student when there were not enough tickets for all.

2. At the golden sacerdotal jubilee of Pius X, he, as the leader of a group of first-year students, occupied such a fortunate position in St. Peter's, that the Holy Father was carried past him quite closely and with a smile on his lips beckoned to the little red troop, so that the public regarded the students with some surprise.

Shortly after, when the whole college conveyed its greetings to the Holy Father, he who so gladly took the last place was to be still more greatly surprised. With the jesting words: "*Erunt primi novissimi*" (the last shall be first), the Holy Father passed by the reverend Fathers and first extended his hand to Coassini. The Holy Father's exhortation to interior love of God and purity of heart struck him so much more forcibly because he named St. John the Evangelist as an example of one who had always remained true to the Lord in burning love. Nor did he forget the exhortation to diligence in study which the Holy Father fitted quite adroitly into a question concerning the examination results. "It is said that the professors are strict," he remarked, "and that they claim that the Pope has asked them to be strict in the examinations. And it is true; but I admonished them to be strict for your own good. I desire that all clerics study hard, and particularly, that those who come to Rome for their studies receive a superior training. Otherwise, after your return, people could justly ask: Is it necessary to go to Rome for such an education? That would never do!"

3. He was not yet there to witness the beatification, in 1905, of Crisinus, a former pupil of the Germanicum, which the students were naturally privileged to witness from reserved places, but the grand solemnity of the beatification of Joan of Arc (the Maid of Orleans) was a suitable substitute. This solemnity was even surpassed by the grandeur of the canoniza-

tion of Blessed Oriol and Blessed Clement Mary Hofbauer, C. SS. R. St. Peter's Basilica, decorated with suitable draperies and pictures of the saints and illuminated by from 30,000 to 40,000 candles, together with the vast crowd of the faithful who attended the solemn papal Mass, seemed to reflect the glory of Heaven.

Coassini was able to enjoy all this splendor under the most favorable circumstances. Msgr. Bisleti, the majordomo of His Holiness, had reserved places of honor in the procession from the Sistine Chapel as well as at the pontifical Mass for the German College in honor of their countryman, Bl. Clement. In white surplices, the students marched immediately before the bishops, singing psalms, descended the "Scala Regis" into St. Peter's, and were directed to seats near the "Confessio," from which they could easily see everything. They overlooked the long procession of 122 bishops and 22 Cardinals with the Noble Guard and those nearest to the Holy Father. During the entire ceremony they could clearly observe the Holy Father at the altar and on the throne, the delivery of the five candles, two bottles of wine, and five cages with turtle-doves and birds, as well as all the other ceremonies. Coassini, as one of the fifteen students of the Germanicum who, under the direction of Msgr. Perosi, sang in the choir of the Sistine Chapel, entered St. Peter's directly behind the "Sedia Gestatoria" and had a seat in the tribune, where with his "grasshop-

per's tenor," as his fellow-students often teasingly designated his unerring, though not strong voice, he helped to strengthen the choir which had been especially formed for this feast. Such solemnities contributed much to strengthen the oft-recurring resolution: "I will increase my love for holy Church as much as I possibly can." On September 17, he, together with the other singers, had to leave their holiday retreat, S. Pastore, in order to sing at the episcopal consecration of the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Vučic of Zengg, which was performed in the College Church by the Cardinal-Vicar of Rome, Respighi, with the assistance of the former rector of the bishop-elect, Cardinal Steinhuber.

On November 30, 1907, the new nuncio to Munich, Msgr. Frühwirth, was consecrated in the Church of the Anima by the Cardinal Secretary of State, Merry del Val. On this occasion, Coassini with several other students assisted at the altar.

4. Soon after he was privileged to greet the newly elected Bishop of Fulda, Joseph Damian, an alumnus of the Germanicum, who celebrated a pontifical High Mass there. His paternal words, his love and enthusiasm for the Church, made a deep impression on Coassini.

Besides, he became acquainted with a number of other prominent bishops and leaders, who either lived for some time in the College, or visited the institution. Thus the Vicar-Apostolic of Norway, Msgr. Fallize,

gave a complete report of the Northern Missions and during the recreations, which he often spent among the students, gladly answered all their questions and enquiries.

Bishop de Saune spoke for Madagascar, Bishops Jürgens, Döring, and Hurth for India, Msgr. van Reeth for Ceylon, the Vicar-Apostolic Maquet for China, Msgr. Luypen for Batavia, Father Dahlmann, S. J., for Japan, and so forth.

As the visiting bishops sometimes took their subjects along as guides through Rome, and generally also to their audience with the Holy Father, a certain seminarian was justified in saying: "Here in Rome I learn to know my bishop much better, and he me, and I get much closer to him than I could in the seminary at home." The Archbishop of Gorizia wrote that he had learned to know his subject, Coassini, only in Rome.

The Landgravine of Hesse, who, during her stay in Rome, regularly came to the divine services in the College and visited St. Saba and St. Pastore, gave him as well as the other students beautiful pictures of the three patrons of youth. Msgr. Wilpert, the noted authority on the Catacombs, was kind enough on one occasion to explain the pictures in the Catacombs to John and a few others. At a feast in the Austrian embassy a young officer presented him to Dr. Ludwig von Pastor, whose *History of the Popes* was read during meals.

Coassini during such visits usually remained in the background and rarely asked a question. Only later, as prefect, did he sometimes, by a simple question, cause the dragging conversation to flow again. But sometimes he was drawn to the front, as when Bishop Endrici of Trent wished to have a thorough knowledge of the school, or when Cardinal Nagl during his last visit to Rome called on him and refreshed his memories of Trieste, where Coassini had made his classical studies.

Let us close the story of these visits and festivities with a sorrowful recollection. Cardinal Andreas Steinhuber, S. J., who lived in the College, died rather suddenly, after an illness of only two days, on the evening of October 15, 1907, and Coassini had to take part in the sorrowful solemnities of his burial. This prince of the Church, formerly (1867—1880) rector of the Germanicum, had always been a true father to the students, whose grateful memories followed him beyond the grave.

5. Still more than these exceptional visits and solemnities did Coassini esteem the solemn divine services in the College Church and in the Church al Gesù, which were regularly held with great liturgical exactness. With exceptional pleasure he coöperated in the singing and thus contributed to retain and increase the good name which the Germanicum choir enjoyed. Especially for the great feasts and the ceremonies of Holy Week in the Gesù did he practice

long and assiduously and soon reached a point where he could unite exactness with deep recollection in perfect harmony. In consequence of his devout bearing he was often pointed out as a real angel at the altar, and the authorities called on him on special occasions to help out as far as his work permitted.

Besides the ecclesiastical feasts and festivities which especially interest candidates for the priesthood, this year introduced many changes into the college routine.

The old Roman carnival, which Cardinal Steinhuber describes so vividly in his History of the Germanicum (I, 56 sqq.), had not yet disappeared entirely and found a refreshing echo in the College. The three free days were spent with theatrical acts and all kinds of pastimes. During these days, Coassini witnessed the performance of Méhul's opera, "Joseph and his Brethren," in the overture of which he assisted. He saw Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," Hägeli's "Garcia Moreno's Death," etc. On the last evening, humor generally reigned supreme. Among a hundred lively students there are always a few who can make the others laugh. For some time John was the butt of their wit because, when he had served mass for the first time, on Christmas, he had put on a priest's alb instead of a server's surplice. The following excerpt from the letter of a fellow-student shows that Coassini, who was not only well trained in music, but also an adept at drawing, took an active

share in everything: "We often met, John and I, amid the sounds of his beloved violin, which he mastered uncommonly well, or in the Scuola Catechistica, for which he once made a good translation of a German Christmas hymn, or during rehearsals for the stage. It is a wonderful remembrance to me to read what he wrote into my album. First comes a selection (with notes) from the closing choir of Méhul's opera 'Joseph': 'God, how wisely dost Thou lead Thine own through shady ways to final happiness.' How often we regaled ourselves with this splendid text! Then follows a citation from the *Following of Christ* (Bk. III, ch. 21): 'Let others seek whatever else they please instead of Thee; nothing else doth please me, or shall please me, but Thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.' "

Even more than the Carnival, Christmas was a veritable family feast in the College. After the solemn High Mass at midnight, at which John, together with all the other students, received Holy Communion, he paid a joyous visit to the crib, where he heard the splendid German Christmas carols sung by the choir in the hall outside. His portion of the little Christmas presents which, according to custom, were divided among all, he placed in the basket for the poor children.

At New Year's, he had, with his violin, to take part in the university recital which the Father General with his assistants was accustomed to attend.

Epiphany with its octave brought the unforgettable solemnity of the mission feast founded by Vincent Pallotti. In the splendid Church of St. Andrea della Valle during the whole octave priests prayed, and celebrated Mass, and preached the Gospel in all languages. Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli, the diocesan ordinary of their country villa, S. Pastore, assisted at the solemn benediction.

In the College Coassini sometimes took part in the plays of the Three Kings, which, modelled mostly on the Provençal crib plays, were remarkable for their simple naïveté as well as artistic excellence. It often took considerable work to prepare the camel or dromedary on which the Magi came riding into the hall.

John never cared to take part in purely worldly amusements, and regarding scientific entertainments he took the same view as that which he had taken concerning the use of the library: "They are supplemental and must not be regarded as essential. First of all we must make thorough use of what is given us in our ordinary lectures."

Thus did Rome with its feasts and solemnities increase Coassini's love for holy Church. In writing his wishes for a newcomer on a picture of the Sacred Heart, he wove this thought into the text: "May the Sacred Heart, to which this whole College is consecrated, bless your entrance. Rejoice that you are permitted to prepare for the priesthood in the City of the Saints, so near to the Apostolic See, and rejoice

especially that you were sent to this College, whose great advantages you will soon learn to appreciate. I wish you seven years of peace within its walls. Your brother in Christ, J. B. Coassini, of Gorizia."

CHAPTER VI

INTERIOR STRUGGLES

1. Doubts concerning Vocation.—2. Their Danger and Duration.—3. The Final Victory.

1. The purpose of the first retreat, after Christmas, is the removal of any remaining uncertainty regarding the student's vocation. Coassini's notes show with what earnestness he entered upon these holy exercises. He placed himself entirely at the service of the Redeemer: "The Divine Saviour is the King of Heaven; in His goodness and justice He invites us to fight under His banner, to destroy the kingdom of Satan and of darkness, and assures us that we shall conquer. We only need to join forces with Him. He has given us the example. With what readiness must we follow Him! Let us follow Him in the work of vanquishing vice! Let us fight under the banner of Jesus with all our strength, with the full enthusiasm of our souls, and let us fly to the Blessed Virgin for help in this endeavor!"

On New Year's day, 1907, he recalls almost the same thought:—

"*Beginning of the Year.* Hands to work, eyes on the

grave! I resolve to begin the new year in the name of Jesus by receiving Him in Holy Communion. For Him I will work during this year and offer my work to God, especially if it be His will that I should remain in the College and become a priest. . . . I will try to see the vanity of the world and not let it deceive me; on the contrary, labor in view of eternity."

The words, "if it be the will of God that I become a priest," "if I am called to the priesthood," often recur in his notes and show that his choice of vocation was not yet fully decided.

What difficulties were in the way? Did they arise from his character? Did he feel too weak to break with the world? Coassini loved his studies and took great pleasure in prayer and divine service. Life at the College fully responded to his wishes, and the priesthood with its ideal task, its practices of piety and charity, seemed fully able to satisfy the yearning of his heart.

A remark made about this time at a meditation on the sending out of the Apostles reveals how highly he estimated the sacerdotal vocation. He writes: "How great is the love and mercy of God towards us! Who can fully realize the grandeur of the apostolate, by which we are to lead men to God and cooperate in the work of the Redemption? How foolhardy it would be to rush in there without being called; but, on the other hand, how cowardly not to place all one's forces at God's disposal if one is

called. This duty must be preferred to any place of honor on earth."

Shortly after he compares the call to the priesthood with the call to Christianity and says that just as we must thank God for the grace of the true faith by leading an upright life, so we must thank Him for the call to the priesthood by a sincere endeavor to acquire priestly perfection. "For whoever is called to be a priest, is more than anyone else called to be a saint."

And yet he did not dare to yield to the attraction of grace. What held him back? We know the reason. As in the case of St. Aloysius, it was his father who restrained him. Not that John was unduly attached to his parents. In meditating on the Child Jesus in the Temple, he had clearly and energetically written: "If it be the will of God, then I must even separate myself from my parents."

His father was not openly opposed to John's becoming a priest; he had quietly answered his question on that head by saying: "I leave it to you to do what you think best;" but immediately added: "If you no longer feel attracted to the priesthood, give up the idea entirely; it will be better for both you and me." It was the desire of his father, so clearly discernible between the lines, which prevented John from reaching a decision. Well did he know that he was the only son of his parents, that his choice of the priesthood would deprive his father of the hope of

seeing his name continued, that the family shop would have to pass into other hands, and that his choice of the clerical profession would be like a dagger thrust into his father's affectionate heart.

A friend of his father in a lengthy letter insisted upon this. "I wish to tell you frankly," he wrote, "that your father was not particularly edified by your proposal to devote yourself to the clerical state. He fears you may one day grow dissatisfied with your choice and fail to enjoy that happiness which he, as a loving father, would like to secure for you. Besides this reason there is another, which may appear somewhat egotistic, but is fully justified by paternal love. It was your father's pet wish to have you as close to him as possible, both during your studies and later, so that you might ease the burden of his later years. This, I can assure you from experience, is the fondest wish of every father, a wish which he does not like to give up, and which he yields only when he is firmly persuaded that the separation is absolutely necessary in the interest of his children. You have selected precisely that vocation which can satisfy this desire less than any other, be it during your studies or in the future. Hence you may understand what a great sacrifice your father made by giving his approval to your plan." The friend concluded by advising John to reconsider the matter before making a final decision, not amid surroundings that might unduly influence him, but at home with his family.

The loss of one or even two months would mean little when there was question of deciding the happiness of a lifetime.

2. Other difficulties were added to this one. His notes betray persistent doubts about the faith, which threatened to shake the entire foundation of his supernatural life. These doubts were accompanied by great spiritual dryness, and a repugnance, nay antipathy, towards prayer. Even the pleasure he took in his studies diminished, and he complains of loss of time, lack of punctuality, and petty infractions of the rule. The battle had broken out along the whole line.

How did Coassini conduct himself in this struggle? He fought with open visor. Every Sunday morning after Communion he carefully reviewed all phases of the battle, noted his successes and reverses, and expressed himself frankly regarding his position and hope. Nor did he stop there. He not only consulted his college mates, but wrote to his former spiritual director, who answered his question regarding the choice of a vocation as follows: "No one can act as judge in his own case. Reveal everything to your spiritual director and do what he says. You have no doubt heard and read how many others had to fight for their vocation. Woe to him who permits himself to be carried away by first impressions! Be patient and consider everything well."

When, on another occasion, John revealed his

doubts about the faith to his former director, he received this answer: "Tell me frankly: Are you satisfied or not? What is the truth? That you are assailed by doubts against the faith does not surprise me. Satan is always at work. Remember meanwhile that the faith is a gift of God and we must constantly ask Him to keep us steadfast in that virtue and augment it in our hearts."

Meanwhile, Coassini did not cease to pray, commended himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary and especially to the Divine Redeemer: "I will beg the Saviour to enlighten the darkness of my soul; in His holy name I will withstand every temptation, calling upon Him and praying Him to strengthen me." He did not allow his natural love for study to grow cold. In spite of his recurring complaint that he did not make the best use of his time, he had repeatedly resolved not to injure his health by a too intensive application.

In spite of all attacks he clung to his faith. "Above all I need the power of the faith. Hence I must pay no attention to temptations against the faith, but, on the contrary, must pray that my faith may grow stronger and never falter, and every time I pray, I will make a sincere act of faith."

"My faith must be like that of Mary, who was strong in faith," he writes a little later. "The mystery of her faith lay in her innocence and humility. If I remain pure, I shall preserve the faith. I will invoke

Christ in temptations and rely on His grace. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will assist me."

3. The first doubt about his vocation arose soon after his entrance. In meditating on the life of St. John the Baptist, his patron saint, at the text of the Gospel, "There is none in thy kindred that is called by this name," he notes: "I, too, did not follow expectation and tradition." The retreat brought a degree of temporary peace, but in March the battle broke out anew, so violently that the above-named friend felt obliged to ask him the question: "Do you wish to continue on the path which you have selected for yourself, or do you prefer to leave it? You are your own master, and no one will reproach you if you return home."

He sought refuge in the thought of obedience: "God is my Lord, and Him I will above all obey by fulfilling His holy will. If it be His will that I should become a priest, even against my father's wish, I will make the sacrifice cheerfully, enlist in the service of the Lord, and leave it to Him to take care of my father. I will recommend my father to God and ask that he be rewarded with eternal life for the sacrifice he has made."

Thus he rises to the highest and noblest thoughts, compares God's rights over him with those of his father, and hopes that God will reward his father with eternal happiness to replace the earthly happiness of which he deprives him.

Thus he combined loyalty to his father with dutiful fidelity towards God. And on his deathbed he showed confidence that his prayer was heard. When the priest who attended him remarked: "Soon you will greet your mother in Paradise," he immediately added: "Yes, and my father also."

Once he had made his decision, the storm seems to have abated. When he received minor orders, in June and July, 1907, his soul was calm and the notes of the retreat by which he prepared for the reception of Holy Orders reveal how happy he was in his vocation and how joyfully he offered himself to his Redeemer.

CHAPTER VII

TONSURE AND MINOR ORDERS

1. Coassini's Esteem for the Clerical State.—2. His Good Example as Lector.—3. Power of the Exorcist.—4. A Light as Acolyte.

1. Tonsure and the so-called minor orders are the first step into the sanctuary. They do not put the candidate for the priesthood before the final decision, but they are important as the first steps to the altar, the introduction to the hierarchy of the Church. Hence they are often conferred quite early, so that the aspirant may at a youthful age be made aware of the importance of his task. In the Collegium Germanicum all students are given minor orders in their first year of philosophy and prepare for the occasion by a special retreat.

Coassini received the tonsure May 25, 1907, in S. Apollinare at the hands of Bishop Ceppetelli. His thoughts and sentiments on this occasion are reflected in his notes. "I am becoming a cleric," he says to himself. "What does this new state mean to me?" He replies with the thoughts of St. Bernard on the religious state: "The cleric leads a holier life, falls

more rarely, and rises more quickly if he falls, he shows a more dignified exterior, enjoys more abundant graces, and will receive a greater reward in Heaven. What must I do to prepare for the clerical state? (1) I must have a great respect for it; then I shall live so much more holily in it. (2) I must have a strong inclination to embrace the clerical state and be ready to make sacrifices for it. ('The Lord is the part of my heritage and of my chalice.') (3) I must strive after the greatest possible sanctity in this state and (4) bear insult and ridicule for its sake. (5) I must combine glowing zeal with prudence and a pure intention, and think of nothing else but my salvation, the salvation of my fellowmen, and the love of Jesus." As, during the ceremony of the tonsure, he had sacrificed the hair of his head, so he was ready to sacrifice every earthly possession for the love of the Saviour. "I must be poor in spirit and detach my heart from wealth, which should be employed only as a means to an end. Before Christ sent forth His apostles, He acquainted them with the principal characteristics of a true apostle. According to Him we must not impress men by exterior pomp, but by simplicity and poverty. We must be moderate in our bodily needs and ready to make any sacrifice."

Devoutly he prayed when he was being vested in the surplice: "May the Lord clothe me in the new man, who is created similar to God in justice and true sanctity."

With an image of the crown of Christ on his head, and clothed in the white surplice of the Church, the closing exhortation of the bishop made a deep impression on him: "Endeavor to please God by honorable restraint, good morals and actions."

2. During the preparation for the first two minor orders (Porter and Lector), which he received in the Leonine College on June 23d, 1907, John thought particularly of the good example which he would have to give, according to the admonition of the Church: "When you read to others, you stand in an elevated place in the church, in order that you may be heard and seen by all, thus to indicate that you must now acquire a higher degree of virtue."

This admonition laid the foundation of that almost timorous care with which he watched over his exterior behavior and avoided whatever might in any way derogate from the sacerdotal dignity. He himself later expresses it in these words: "My aim must be to have a high regard for the priestly vocation, to honor it, and therefore to abstain from any action or movement opposed to sacerdotal modesty. For the priest is, in a certain sense, through his orders and his mission, another Christ."

His resolutions on this point were as follows:

a) *With my comrades:* Always to remember what we are. A fitting subject shall always be the theme of conversation. I will make no visits without a sufficient reason.

b) *With strangers:* I will try to edify them; my inter-

course with them shall be brief and within the prescribed bounds.

c) *In my letters to others:* Not more than necessary; edifying; always remembering how much can be accomplished in this way, even in one's own family; governing each and every communication according to the will of God.

By following these rules he acquired that genuine sacerdotal tact which all admired in him and by which he quickly won all hearts. He strengthened it by his meditations and learned it more perfectly from the Divine Saviour himself. Thus, in meditating on the raising of the daughter of Jairus to life, he writes: "Among the more refined, we must behave as the Redeemer did towards this family: not run after them, nor oppose them regardless of consequences, but pardon lack of friendliness among them."

Few of his resolutions were so happily and successfully put into practice during his college career as that pertaining to the observance of priestly dignity. To the question: How did Coassini during these years exercise such a powerful influence over all? We hear but one answer, namely, by his example. There was nothing strange about him, nothing to indicate that he was ignorant of the ways of the world; he took part in everything, but knew how to conduct himself so that no one ever forgot the respect due to the priestly dignity.

And particularly did this noble bearing assert

itself when he performed his duties in the church. It was plainly evident that "what he read with his mouth, he believed in his heart and accomplished in deed. Hence he taught his auditors by word and example."

3. He received the last two of the minor orders (Exorcist and Acolyte) on July 15, 1907, in the Church of S. Trinità della Missione on Monte Citorio. His first resolution in the preparatory retreat was directed against the tempter. The bishop admonishes: "Strive to remove from your heart and body all impurity and malice, in order that you may not fall under the power of those whom you are to drive out of others through your office." On this he remarks: "To oppose temptations energetically and with a commanding tone, after the maner of Jesus Christ, this is the virtue of the exorcist. By temptation man is humbled, purified, and perfected. Fire proves iron and temptation tests the just. He who resists exteriorly only, and does not eradicate the root of evil, will make little progress. If we do not oppose the enemy with decision from the very beginning, he will soon attack us along the whole line. Let us, therefore, in all humility submit to the hand of God in our temptations and trials, for He will save and raise up the humble of heart."

On other occasions he reminds himself of the advantages connected with temptation: "Temptations are very useful to me; they promote humility and

strengthen virtue. What a consolation it is for me to know that nothing can harm me as long as I adhere to God! Therefore, in every temptation I must remain tranquil and trust in God. Nothing humiliates the tempter more than to see himself despised. Like a dog tied to a chain, he may frighten by barking, but he cannot bite."

After having framed a few practical thoughts for the time of temptation, he closes his considerations with a clear and firm resolution: "In temptations I will neither forget nor reduce my good resolutions; I will not begin to treat with the devil, but repel him without parleying, trust in God, pray, and humble myself."

4. As an acolyte, whose office it is to carry the light at the Holy Sacrifice, John recalls the words of the Saviour: "So then let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and praise your Father who is in heaven." And he adds: "I will not cease to ponder the importance of this admonition of the Redeemer"; for, "you cannot please God if you carry the light before God in your hands, but in your works serve the spirit of darkness and thus give others an example of the greatest infidelity!" After repeating the form of this order, he reminds himself: "Fly the works of darkness and carry before you the light of good works and good example." He copies the words of the Apostle quoted in the ordination prayers and applies them to himself: "In the midst of a per-

verted and sinful generation you shall shine as heavenly lights through the word of life which you carry in you." "I will indeed become such a heavenly light," he resolved for himself, and continues: "Therefore, gird up your loins and, with burning lamps in your hands, be sons of light. Abstinence, zeal, modesty are the virtues proper to the acolyte. It is his office to hold lamps in his hands; let him, therefore, be a son of light. For only if by a pure life and good works you offer yourself as a sacrifice to God, will you worthily present wine and water for the Holy Sacrifice."

This copious selection of noble thoughts drawn from the liturgical prayers and admonitions of the Church shows with what joy and spiritual profit he meditated. He ends with the following words written in large letters: "Before every liturgical function I will recall what it is supposed to signify." Then he asks himself the question what constitutes that interior perfection which responds to the edifying appearance and piety of the acolyte. And he answers:

a) In relation to God: Purity of heart, hatred of and aversion for sin, and the closest union with God through prayer.

b) In relation to my neighbor: Fraternal charity.

c) In relation to myself: Perfect mastery over self, fidelity to my vocation, zeal for souls.

With the grace of God I will acquire these perfections and therefore resolve as follows:—

a) Every morning when I enter the church, I will remember that I must make progress in virtue throughout the day.

b) I will enter upon this task with a firm will, and

c) Pray devoutly and remember that God is present.

This earnest preparation for minor orders gives us an idea how carefully John made his preparation for the reception of major orders. In the course of the succeeding five years there was no relaxation, but constant progress in piety. It also reveals a trait of character which became more evident from year to year and cast a peculiar charm over his whole being: He constantly thought, lived, and felt in harmony with the Church; her prayers became his prayers; her admonitions found the way to his heart.

"For the love of Jesus," he said, "we must be full of love for the Church and manifest this love by gradually learning to know her and her decisions better, so that in everything we may think as she does and constantly grow in her spirit. At present we must serve the Church by steadily progressing in piety and in our studies."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE SERVICE OF FRATERNAL CHARITY

1. Coassini is Entrusted with Little Offices.—2. He Seeks in Them only the Glory of God.—3. He Devotes himself Entirely to his Vocation.—4. He Inspires Respect for the Rule.—5. He Satisfies All.

1. Besides minor orders, Coassini's first year at the Germanicum brought few changes in the daily routine. Seeing that he attracted attention by his appearance and bearing, his superiors soon entrusted him with little offices and thus gave him an opportunity to serve his fellow-students.

The scholastic year had hardly begun when he was named beadle. As such, he was the official representative of the first-year course. If congratulations were to be extended to a professor, or if anything had to be settled or arranged between professors and students, the duty devolved upon Coassini. He had also to appoint those who were to conduct the regular disputations. At the first public examination (*actus publicus*) he was commissioned to defend a thesis "*De Libris Logicis Aristotelis.*"

These offices offered him many opportunities to

serve his fellow-students. His rule was: "Always be prepared to serve others, with total disregard of self." He served his fellow-students so unostentatiously that only a few recognized his virtues during this first year. "We must try to keep our good works secret and never speak of ourselves," he often repeated.

After Easter, being of Italian birth, he was appointed to instruct his classmates in the Italian language. "He found this duty easy and performed it without shyness, but with his usual simplicity," says one of his fellow-students. The course closed with a written examination, for which he chose the chapter on the edifying death of St. Aloysius from Father Schröder's *Life*. Little did he suspect that his own early demise was to resemble in many ways that of this great Saint.

In his second year, he, with two other students, was entrusted with the work of looking after the newcomers: he became "ductor," a position which he again held the following year.

2. The spirit with which he accepted and accomplished his duties is revealed in his notes: "In my office I will practice charity and patience, employ the greatest care and be sufficiently severe in guiding those for whom I am responsible. I will try to renew this good intention frequently."

His prefect of that time attests that he kept this resolution: "He had a great love for the Sacred Heart

of Jesus, and in it loved his fellow-students. He performed his office of 'ductor' as though it were a divine service. When I wrote in the souvenir album of his first Mass: 'To my dear brother in the vineyard of St. Stanislaus [division of philosophers], he said joyfully: 'Yes, we have a vineyard of the Lord here.'" It was no wonder that the Sacred Heart blessed his efforts. Calmly and amiably he performed his work. His delicate tact enabled him to do justice to his position even in difficult circumstances.

3. His work was not very arduous. He had to receive all newcomers, introduce them to the house, and assist them by advice and help during the first few days. Immediately upon his return from S. Pastore he inspected all the rooms to make sure that they were in good order, supplied what was wanting, and arranged a signal with the porter so that it did not take long to find him when he was needed; as soon as the signal sounded, he immediatly hastened to the entrance.

Many still recall with what cordiality, but also with what modesty, he received newcomers. He first conducted them to the Rector's office and then provided refreshments for them. Afterwards he took each one to his room, showed him its arrangements and inquired as to his wishes, which he satisfied to the best of his ability.

4. He not only introduced the newcomers to their quarters, but also instructed them concerning the cus-

toms of the house. He talked little, but gave a good example at all times.

From his notes we learn that he often asked himself whether he always gave a good example, and if he thought that he had not done enough in this respect, he roused himself with some such reflection as this: "I must be more careful in always giving a good example. This also belongs to the duties of a priest. Hence I must avoid whatever is opposed to modesty and always keep this virtue before my eyes."

That he made a good impression on all is attested by one of his fellow-students, who writes:

"Coassini attracted my attention from the very beginning. What I not only praised, but also admired, in him is that he not only performed good deeds now and then, but was virtuous in every detail of his conduct. I never noticed a trace of bad temper or impatience in him; he never acted as one who was offended. Yet, he showed none of those qualities which people sometimes associate with extraordinary piety. There was no one-sidedness in his character. He seems to have aimed at, and with the grace of God to have actually acquired, a harmonious development of all his spiritual factulties. . . . His bearing was extraordinarily modest, but quite natural withal. . . . At holy services he appeared dignified and precise, and yet there was no sickening sentimentality in his behavior, nothing which might be offensive."

Newcomers were unconsciously inspired by his

example with respect for the rules and regulations of the house. He himself had noted concerning these rules, which, of course, did not bind under pain of sin: "Order is necessary everywhere; *a fortiori* in preparing for the priesthood. How much more can we not accomplish if we go about it in an orderly manner. In observing order (the rule) we especially practice: (1) self-restraint and mortification (how rare are the other occasions for this); (2) obedience in every act and hence humility; (3) charity, for obedience to the rule must be voluntary."

Great temples are built of little stones and great priestly sanctity grows out of the little acts of every day. Hence his loyalty in every detail. Particularly did he observe the rule of silence. He held that silence not only encourages the spirit of prayer and promotes study, but also suppresses many a useless word. "We must guard against useless words. The Lord has given us an easy means to this end, namely, the rule of silence, which must be observed religiously." If he was accosted, he stood still at once and answered in a friendly manner, but avoided gossip.

In his room also he was ready always to render any service, but he drew a sharp line between services of charity and unnecessary talk; so much so that some said: "We can find no fault with the doctor, but it is impossible to get him to converse during study periods."

It was a rare good fortune for the newcomers of 1908 that they received their first impressions of the College from Coassini. Already at the first meeting they sensed the spirit of sanctity which emanated from him.

Hence we must not wonder if many a youth who fled from the world and sought the true ideal of the priesthood in the College, felt himself drawn towards this living ideal and his heart told him: Attach yourself to Coassini!

This all the more, since Coassini was accustomed to give himself entirely, just as he was, and never plumed himself with strange feathers, but always, when unable to respond, simply said: "I don't know."

He never got into trouble because he always acted in a frank and honest manner. A fellow-student who assisted him as "ductor," said of him that he could imagine no situation in which Coassini would have felt embarrassed. He was envied by many for his splendid natural talents. Since not the slightest dissonance was apparent in his exterior, they thought that he really had no difficulties to contend with.

5. Besides conducting the new students around the building, he had also to make them acquainted with the city. Whoever comes to Rome wants to see and learn and derive pleasure and profit from the rich treasures of art and antiquity stored up within its walls. During the first few days he accompanied

those who had been entrusted to his care to the great monuments which are usually pointed out to strangers, to the basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul, the Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, St. Agnes, St. Lorenzo, to the famous ruins of the Forum, the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Capitol, to the hot springs etc. But during the year he generally chose only one place for observation and thereby gave his companions a better opportunity for study.

During the entire first term he was wont to take the students after lectures to some church or sanctuary which he loved. Many wondered how he was able to find even the less famous sanctuaries. In church he did not merely kneel for a brief adoration, but took more time in showing the students the tabernacle than the whole church. He generally selected days when there was no class or feast-days for the inspection of the art treasures of the Vatican and Lateran, for mounting the Cupola of St. Peter's, for visiting the Vatican Gardens and Observatory, and for the thorough study of the Forum or the Catacombs, for on such days there was often a chance to hear Marucchi or some other archaeologist lecture.

Always he did his best to make his young charges happy. During Lent, the best preachers, regular and secular, appear in the pulpits of the different churches of Rome. The students of rhetoric of the Germanicum together with their professor from time to time go to hear such a sermon and discuss it in

class the following day—a most pleasing form of diversion. Hardly had Lent begun when Coassini asked the professor of rhetoric whether there were no able Lenten preachers in Rome this year and in what church the best sermons were delivered.

He proceeded so respectfully and prudently that he was always pleasantly received. He never told the others that he would ask for this or that favor, and then blame the superiors when denied, but always adhered closely to his resolution "humbly and simply to fulfill all the duties of my office, to look after the common interest, but take care that the others do not know that it was I who obtained such and such a favor for them."

A pastor who was one of his first charges writes as follows of him: "He was my *ductor* in the first year. I always admired his equanimity, his conscientiousness, his diligence and thoroughness, as well as his modesty, learning, and devotion, his faithful observance of the rule and his politeness, his earnest yet cheerful disposition. . . . I must enumerate all the virtues. Vices he had none. Never did he utter a harsh word to a colleague, no matter how well deserved it would have been."

Another remark: "All, even those who were ordinarily slow in bestowing praise, agreed at the end of the year that Coassini did his work exceptionally well."

CHAPTER IX

COASSINI AS A CATECHIST IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

1. Origin and Work of the Sunday School in the Collegium Germanicum.—2. Qualities and Resolutions of Coassini.—3. His Preparation.—4. Difficulties which He Encountered.—5. His Fruitful Zeal.

1. In the second year of philosophy his superiors entrusted Coassini with an office that was of great benefit to him, namely, teaching religion in the Sunday School attached to the College.

In Italy hundreds, nay, thousands of children roamed the country roads and city streets who had never learned to read or write, nay, who had not received any religious instruction and were consequently unable to make the sign of the cross or to recite the Our Father. Zealous students of the Germanicum used to gather up a number of these derelicts on Sundays, instructed them, and prepared them for confession and first Holy Communion. The present bishop of Trent, Msgr. Endrici, when a student at the College, injected a little more system into this sporadic activity. In 1891, with the permission of his superiors, accompanied and fortified with the blessing of the

Holy Father, he organized Sunday Schools for these abandoned children. Though in the beginning the number of pupils did not exceed twenty, it grew rapidly from year to year, and in 1900 reached the two hundred mark, which number remained fairly stable during the ensuing years. The school is now divided into six classes; every Sunday and holiday the boys assemble from 9:30 to 12:00 o'clock to hear Mass and be instructed in Christian doctrine; besides, every month, according to recent decrees, an opportunity for general confession and Communion is given on Sunday. After school, all receive a piece of bread. No forcible means are applied; sometimes the parents help, but in most cases the authority of the teacher is the sole attraction.

With genuine enthusiasm the students of the College thus instruct the warm-blooded little Romans and are happy to see that their efforts are not wasted. How often do they find a golden heart beneath the tattered clothes of these neglected street urchins! Their very tatters were a special motive which led Coassini to devote himself to these little ones. "What we do for the poor," he said, "we do with a good intention, for they cannot reward us. Whoever wishes to please Jesus must love the poor. We should gladly associate with the poor and simple, as Jesus did, in whom all the treasures of wisdom were hidden."

2. Coassini took a special interest in the Sunday School, which furnished him a means to satisfy his

glowing zeal to help others. The fact that he was soon selected for this office shows that he possessed the necessary qualifications. Italian was his second mother-tongue, his cheerfulness made the children love him, his sterling character preserved him from wasting time. The preparation of precious young hearts for the reception of the eternal truths and of the great Sacraments of Penance and the Altar is apt to fascinate a young apostle and to detach him from the abstract study of philosophy, nay, even to wean him from prayer and other pious practices.

Coassini soon recognized this danger and drew up this rule as a safeguard: "I must not make the Sunday School the chief part of my work, but only spend so much time at it as I can reasonably spare." This rule he followed faithfully.

In the resolutions which he made for 1910–1911, he describes the manner in which he wished to unite study with instruction. "*Scuola Catechistica!* I will endeavor to do everything from a motive of charity. I will try to acquire the necessary knowledge and ask for advice when in doubt. I will devote to this work especially the free days or the less important hours and moments when I must interrupt my studies."

He regarded the school as a means to enkindle his zeal, as an opportunity to do good and to prepare for his later vocation: "To be true apostles, we must resemble the Good Shepherd. We must learn to know our sheep, acquaint them with Jesus, and be

prepared to make any sacrifice for them. I must use my work in the Sunday School to become a good shepherd; I can practice in it with great profit."

In order to fire his zeal he says: "I must be zealous in instructing the little ones in their religion; but whatever I do for them, I must do as Jesus would do it, and for the love of Jesus."

"As far as the school is concerned, I will not occupy myself too much with it, but do whatever my superiors wish, employ care, authority, and severity, do all with a supernatural purpose, and recommend the difficulties that arise to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Virgin Mary."

3. Whatever Coassini began, he carried out resolutely. Hence he never went to the school without preparing himself thoroughly. There is still extant a series of short preparations, written in his usual orderly manner, and based on approved models. He was not one of those who hold that any man who has finished his classics can, without preparation, talk religion to a poor child for a whole hour. A number of his catechetical lessons are elaborated in conformity with the latest scientific method and show many marginal notes written in pencil; such as: "This made no impression. . . . I forgot that. . . . The children did not understand that. . . . I forgot it. . . . Part of it was not understood and hence the whole made little impression. . . . The conclusion was not very impressive. . . . The story should have been

more gripping," and so forth. From all of which it can be clearly seen that Coassini carefully prepared every lesson, and after it was over, once more reviewed it in order to correct any faults to be avoided in subsequent lessons.

Thus he not only prepared each instruction carefully, but also extended his knowledge of the theory of catechetics. As in all his studies, so here also he followed the principle: "Not too much, but the best, and that thoroughly!" Twenty closely written sheets of a "Special Method of Catholic Religious Instruction" which he prepared show how closely he adhered to this rule. We can only give a few extracts:

The End and Object of Religious Instruction:

a) The children should be led to know God. We must not place the greatest weight on the repetition of words, although it is important that the terminology be exact. It is not enough that the children know their catechism, they must be convinced of its truth; hence we must weave motives and acts of religion into our instruction.

b) The children must be persuaded to lead a life that corresponds to their religious knowledge. Hence it is important that they should know the commandments and be willing to observe them.

To overcome the difficulties which, he finds, the more highly educated experience in descending to the intellectual level of children, he enumerates the following means:

a) Let us consider the utility of religious instruction.

b) Let us think of the injury resulting from inadequate instruction, which can never be fully repaired.

c) Let us regard the sublime example of the Divine Lover of children and that of Apostolic bishops and priests.

d) Let us meditate on the grandeur of this work (we give the children the bread of their souls, perform the work of the guardian angel).

e) Prayer is for the catechist what rain is for the farmer.

f) Discussions are very useful.

The method of instruction, he says, should be objective, psychological, practical, and in conformity with the spirit of the Church. Even though most of the thoughts contained in the notes which he has left us are derived from Spirago, the careful synopsis which he made in both German and Italian shows with what care he prepared himself for the catechetical instruction of the poor neglected children of Rome.

4. In the begining Coassini met with difficulties of the kind which every beginner has to overcome; his modesty made an impression of shyness and timidity which the lively children of the "Quirites" soon exploited. Moreover, his manner of expression was too abstract and general and lacked the picturesque, the concrete, and the graphic. He presented to the children many well-ordered thoughts, but few stories. It was discouraging that, after sacrificing time and work, and making a thorough preparation, he had no attentive audience. But he refused to be disheartened. He looked up to the Saviour admonishing His Apostles to be patient with the children that crowded about

him. "The large number of little ones must never become a burden to me; Christ sharply rebuked impatience towards them on the part of His Apostles. The kindness with which He received children admonishes us that we should treat them with special love."

The following lesson he had evidently learned from the Redeemer in his meditations: "I must avoid all sensual attachment to the little ones, for this could only hinder my work among them; such love is meet for the corporal father, but the spiritual father should entertain only spiritual love." Hence he always approached the children with supernatural charity. He worked for the Saviour and did not place success first. He continued to prepare himself well, from time to time called the director into his room, watched other teachers in order to learn from them, and gradually adopted into his vocabulary the word "severity," although it had quite a soft sound on his lips.

5. Thus he showed how much firm, quiet determination and attentive observation can accomplish in a relatively short time. A professor describes Coassini's appearance among the children in these words: "When I heard him speak to the children for the first time, I could not help thinking: He certainly does exceptionally well; one might think he had spent many years in the ministry."

To this judgment we add that of a fellow-student who worked several years at his side:

Among his qualifications as a teacher, especially in so far as his relations to the boys are concerned, his kindness deserves special mention. The boys never attempted to mimic him or make faces at him. The moment he appeared in class, perfect silence reigned, no matter how much noise there had been before. He could speak with exceptional force to the boys, and if he opened his eyes wide and gave a severe look to a boy, the latter invariably felt severely punished and further punishment was superfluous.

Another great advantage was that he had no pets and never permitted anything to one which was not permitted to the others.

It was a real joy to listen to him instructing the boys in their catechism. I shall never forget how on one occasion he prepared the children for confession. As usual, all hung on his lips. He could move the consciences of the little ones with such skill that they sometimes unwittingly revealed their state of soul by a shake or nod of the head or endeavored to count the number of their sins on their fingers. He forgot no avenue of sin, but at the same time practiced the greatest restraint in what concerned the coarser affairs of life.

It was a joy to hear how he moved their hearts to imperfect contrition and inflamed them with the most touching motives of perfect contrition. Truly, the children whom he prepared all made a good confession.

Only once John appeared to this witness to act a little precipitately. The boys were very fond of the electric light, and to turn it off or on seems to have been a real joy for them, in spite, or perhaps on account of, the prohibition. Once it happened that Coassini caught a student at the forbidden act and imme-

diately slapped him in the face. But the presumptive culprit was not guilty, for he had acted by order of his teacher. How much this inconsiderate punishment hurt Coassini, is apparent from the fact that afterwards, when teased by his comrades, he tried to excuse himself by saying that if the lad did not do wrong in this case, he had deserved punishment long ago, for he had certainly done the same thing often without being punished.

The same witness summarizes Coassini's activity as catechist thus: "God alone knows how much good John did for the school. It is difficult to estimate how much time he sacrificed and how much patience he practiced. The material sacrifices, too, which he made, are recorded only in the Book of Life."

The frequent distribution of prizes to diligent and good pupils shows that Coassini had a tender eye and a compassionate heart for his poor boys. Many of these prizes were purchased out of his own means, though the left hand rarely knew what the right hand did.

CHAPTER X

A DAY IN THE COLLEGIUM GERMANICUM

1. Beginning of the Day.—2. Morning Prayers and Meditation.—3. Fruits of the Meditation.—4. Holy Mass and Communion.—5. Reflections on the Meditation.—6. Study. Recreation.—8. Spiritual Reading and Rosary.—9. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.—10. Evening Prayers.

1. Coassini's daily routine began at five o'clock, when he made a brief visit to the chapel and said his morning prayers before the Blessed Sacrament. Then he devoted half an hour to meditation in his room, followed by holy Mass with Communion and thanksgiving at six. Breakfast was at 6:45. Ordinarily, the lectures at the university began at eight o'clock. Coassini generally attended two or three in the forenoon, with the customary academic recesses. The rest of the time he spent in private study until twelve o'clock, when he ate his dinner in common with the other students and listened to spiritual reading or sermon practice, unless—which happened rarely—the sign for conversation was given. After dinner he made a short visit to the chapel and then spent an hour of pleasant recreation with his companions. After rec-

reation he immediately resumed his studies. Only in the summer time—as the rule, with a view to climatic conditions, permits—did he take a little "siesta." In the afternoon he generally heard one or two lectures, and then, after a little refreshment, devoted the remaining hours to private study, in as far as his time was not taken up by general disputations or other practices. Supper, at 7:15 P. M., was again followed by a brief visit to the Blessed Sacrament and a half hour of recreation in common. The remaining time he devoted to the preparation of his meditation and night prayers. About 9:30 he went to bed.

This was the ordinary routine at the Germanicum. Coassini carefully avoided all exceptions to the rule; but if an exception had to be made, he would first go to the chapel and ask the advice of his Saviour, then discuss the case with his spiritual director, and finally obtain the necessary permission.

2. Fortunately his notes enable us to look into his soul and follow the dispositions with which he offered all his work and recreation to God, thus by means of the ordinary tasks of every day rearing a structure of exceptional sanctity.

The evening before he determined the first thought which was to engage his mind upon awaking. Without hesitation he arose at the first sound of the morning salute: "Praised be Jesus Christ," devoutly made the sign of the cross and formulated a good in-

tention with the words of Pslam 116: "*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, laudate eum omnes populi*" (Praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise Him, all ye peoples), whereby he offered to the Lord all the forces of body and soul for the whole day, "*quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius*" (for His mercy is confirmed upon us). Then he meditated a moment on what the day would bring him from the paternal hand of God: Holy Mass, Communion, an enjoyable holiday celebration, a gripping exhortation, etc., offered his particular examen to the Redeemer, and briefly recalled the points of his meditation.

"Three thoughts especially," he says, "are calculated to revive spiritual zeal every morning. The first is: God has given me this day that I may praise Him, love Him, and thus gather merits for eternity. The second is: God wills this day to give me many, perhaps extraordinary, graces, on which my eternal happiness largely depends, provided I am ready to coöperate with Him. The third is: This day may be the last day of my life, and penetrated with this thought, I must try to pass the whole day profitably."

While putting on his clothes he often recited certain vocal prayers. He was fond of offering all the actions of the day to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary by means of the "*O Domina mea,*" recited in common during Mass. He invariably hurried to the chapel in order to have a little more time for his

morning prayer, which he recited after a definite, set formula. Since he had never been in any other seminary, he composed a number of prayers for himself, which he always held ready and which preserved him from distraction. He always closed his morning prayer with the sincere petition that God might bless his meditation. That meditation lasted half an hour and was made in his room, as is customary in the College. After closing the window, he stood a moment before his priedieu, recalled the presence of God, the significance of the ensuing half-hour, and reminded himself of the duty of summoning all forces and applying them to the work in hand. Then he knelt down and, after the customary prayer of preparation, recalled the points for meditation which he had selected the evening before, pondered them, and converted them into fruitful resolutions for his daily life.

He employed these holy moments well: "Every day I will make my meditation with great care and turn it to practical use. The meditation should help me to look at all things from a supernatural point of view."

"The greatest danger to perseverance arises from confusion of thought. Hence, in our daily meditation we must try to apply the general principles to particular cases."

The notes we still have from his pen show how clearly he distinguished meditation from study, and

how energetically and perseveringly he purged and steeled his whole character in the fire of meditative prayer.

Seldom do we find in the mind of a young seminarist such a clear perception of the object of the clerical life as appears in the brief notes which Coassini wrote each week after his meditation. Generally it is a simple *volo* (I will) or *nolo* (I will not) around which the most striking thought is wrapped as a strong motive. Here are a few examples:

I want to practice holy indifference. Therefore I must not look to my own comfort, but must constantly keep before my eyes the goal that rises in front of me. I must not arrange my future according to my own judgment, but must be ready for anything which God may send me through the hands of my superiors. Therefore, in all difficulties, sufferings, attacks, I will show great confidence, patience, and a holy cheerfulness.

Oh, how great is the meekness and mercy of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep! That is the true spirit of Jesus Christ—pity for sinners; it is this above all that I must learn from Him if I want to become a good priest.

How foolish to neglect the spiritual for the sake of the material; but it is equally foolish to allow the impulses of divine grace to pass by unused and to mar the purity of heart by yielding to certain little attachments and sensual pleasures or to a certain inclination to pride.

He loves to take his resolutions from the example of the Redeemer, and to draw the whole scene into his argument:

On Palm Sunday Jesus clearly shows us the spirit of His Kingdom: peace, meekness, humility. By these three virtues we must distinguish ourselves in His Kingdom. He also shows us how foreign the desire for fame is to His spirit. As He enters the City in triumph, His thoughts are centred on its destruction and on His own Passion. Therefore, if I am in danger of yielding to a certain craving for honor or distinction, I will recall my mistakes and weaknesses, and consider that, to please Jesus, I must distinguish myself by humility and mortification.

How simple and yet how practical is his modest exhortation to have confidence in the Mother of God:

Go forward with confidence in Mary! I must learn to know better her lovable heart, which is open to all the needs of her children. Through her intercession I can obtain everything.

He nearly always discovers the practical aspect of a meditation and frequently reminds himself of the necessity of having a pure intention:

It is foolish for me to try to please men and appear great in their eyes; for our interior disposition will be revealed on judgment day. If, on the other hand, I only seek to please Jesus, I shall always be happy and contented, and the Lord in His mercy will not withhold His consolations from me.

From time to time he merely records what he did and how his meditation ran; "At the foot of the Cross

I asked forgiveness for my sins, and brought thither my resolutions, which I dipped in the blood of Jesus, firmly resolving not to serve the world, but Him who is our Saviour."

3. The reason why he made these notes ("*Lumina*") was not their intrinsic value, nor the desire of gradually acquiring a collection of the inspiring thoughts which he had taken from the best devotional books and made his own by meditation. He had a higher aim. He was moved above all by respect for the inspirations which God gives in meditation. In his third year of philosophy he writes: "If the Lord gives me a certain enlightenment, I must pray that He keep it alive and strengthen it in me; I must keep it constantly before my eyes and convert it into practice. Thus I will always become more conformable to the will of God." The Blessed Virgin was his model. "Mary preserved all those words in her heart. I must imitate her interior spiritual life, in order to prepare myself for the priesthood and then to possess it perfectly. The priest enters into such close relations with the Divine Redeemer that his interior life should resemble that of the Blessed Virgin; she is given to every priest, and to every candidate for the priesthood, as a pattern."

It was to attain this aim that he had recourse to the aid of written notes. In particular he wished to force himself, as it were, by these written notes to keep the practical needs of life constantly before

his eyes, and—as far as possible—to put into practice on the same day what he had resolved upon in his morning meditation: "I will make practical resolutions in my meditation. My resolutions shall be framed more precisely and adapted more carefully to my daily needs." Such and similar thoughts often recur in his notes.

4. Holy Mass followed immediately upon the meditation, and John often simply let the sentiments of the morning meditation continue to move him during Mass. Sometimes he used a missal or other prayer book. The main thought which always occupied him during the Holy Sacrifice he expresses thus:

"The great thought which shall occupy my mind when I attend Mass, is that the Mass is nothing else but the repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross." He imagined himself standing beneath the cross, looking up to the Redeemer who offered His life for love, thanked Him for His generosity, prayed for an unstinted spirit of sacrifice in his chosen vocation, placed himself and all his work into the bleeding wounds of the Son of God, and thus constantly penetrated more deeply into the Divine Heart.

Holy Communion was to him the most powerful protection against all dangers: "By the frequent reception of the Redeemer in Holy Communion and by daily attendance at Mass, we form a lasting union with Jesus, which will protect us against all dangers and give us the strength to overcome all temptations."

"A life in and for Jesus is, according to the words of the Saviour Himself, the principal effect of Holy Communion."

The care with which he prepared himself revealed his high opinion of Communion: "In order to receive Communion daily with the proper dispositions, I resolve to use the greatest care in making my preparation and thanksgiving, and therefore to change the method occasionally. I will try constantly to increase my respect for it and to receive it more devoutly. To this end I will occasionally read a good book on the subject."

He naturally drew more from his daily meditation than from his readings. If he finds that the Redeemer demands faith, he immediately makes the application: "The Lord measures His grace by the firmness of our faith. Therefore I must make a lively act of faith and confidence before Holy Communion."

In meditating on the text "*Et exultavit*" he notes: "This is a text which I can repeat at Holy Communion."

Sometimes he would talk over his work with the Eucharistic Saviour: "At Holy Communion I will present to Him all my plans for the day and ask Him to bless them." Then again he would use Communion as a preparation for the daily sacrifices required of him: "Daily Communion must give me the strength to practice mortification." Therefore he wishes to think of it all day long: "I must try always to keep

my thoughts near my Saviour, so that I can continually thank Him for my last Communion and prepare myself for the next."

Thus daily Communion was to him "the fount of zeal, the source of life," because he earnestly endeavored to "take his Saviour into his heart every day with the greatest possible zeal."

Significant for his remote preparation is the remark which is found among his earliest notes: "I do not taste the extreme sweetness of the Holy Eucharist, because it is a spiritual food, and I am still inclined to the flesh. Only when I acquire an aversion for sensual pleasure, shall I taste the sweetness of this heavenly banquet."

He loved to serve Mass, though he admitted that he was sometimes less recollected while doing so.

5. As there was no reading at the breakfast table, he improved the time to survey his meditation and attendance at Mass. He honestly asked himself in the presence of God whether he had meditated well or not, and why, and then made an act of contrition or sincere thanksgiving, as the case might be. He went through every part of the meditation to see if his recollection was deep and respectful; he reviewed the activity of his reason, the state of his will, and the sincerity of his prayers. Thus he learned to know and to avoid his mistakes, and evolved all those little contrivances which helped him so much in meditating and sanctifying himself.

Nor did he merely search out his faults; no, he also gathered up the fruits of his meditation and the good resolutions which he had made, and recommended them to his Saviour in a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament after breakfast, and begged for the grace of carrying them out in practice.

From the exhortations which he was wont to address to himself we can see what pains he took to interest, so to speak, the Redeemer in his good resolutions: "During my morning and afternoon visits to the Blessed Sacrament I will renew my resolutions and strive to increase and confirm the fruits of my meditation."

"Every morning after breakfast," says a fellow-student who shared his room at S. Pastore, "Coassini picked up a little black book and made notes in it. Then he began his work." The dates in the note-book confirm this observation. During the vacation period no day passes without a note; during the school year he is satisfied with jotting down some notes three or four times a week.

6. Before beginning to work he put his room in order, paying due attention to punctuality and neatness in every detail. "A priest must distinguish himself by cleanliness, punctuality, and an edifying behavior. Hence I resolve to be always neat, punctual in all my undertakings, and ever to conduct myself in an edifying manner, at the same time avoiding any attitude, look, or conversation which would be unworthy of the garb I wear."

The work itself he began with prayer. Generally he knelt down and recited the prayer which St. Thomas was accustomed to say before study and work: "*Creator ineffabilis qui*," etc. Occasionally he would utter an ejaculatory prayer, but for the rest he regarded his work as a prayer and studied as hard as he could. "As the Blessed Virgin in Nazareth directed everything to God, so I also must do everything for Him. Every piece of work must be directed to the proper end. . . . I must not arbitrarily jump from one thing to another."

In difficulties he took refuge in prayer: "In doubts and need, let my first care be to have recourse to humble prayer, and as often as I get into difficulties, I will fly to God with an ejaculation." Thus he combined wisdom with piety. "For wisdom without piety and a pure intention exposes a man to great danger."

The recesses and the time necessary to go up or down stairs or spent in waiting before any room or in the refectory, were generally also devoted to prayer. Some students loved to watch him on such occasions, to see whether his lips moved. "In order to serve the Lord in all uprightness, I will often think of Him by means of short ejaculatory prayers." "If I would always heed the presence of God, what progress I should make," he reminded himself on one occasion.

7. He always appeared punctually for meals, quietly prayed with eyes cast down till all were pres-

ent and the signal for the common prayer was given. At table he was a model of modesty and politeness. While he was nourishing his body, his thoughts were on the subject of the table reading or on the sermon which was being delivered.

He always participated in the recreations of the community unless weighty reasons compelled him to ask for exemption. As director of the Sunday School he could easily have found reasons to be excused, but here, too, he never deviated from his firm resolution: "I will try hard to take part in the common exercises and avoid exceptions."

During recreation he was gay and sympathetic and contributed as much as he could to enliven the conversation; especially did he like to assist in doing some good. Interiorly in conversation and recreation he always tried to have a good intention and to remember the presence of God. After every long conversation he made a short examination to see how he might make the talk useful for himself and for others.

He regarded recreation as a means, indeed, as an important means, of preparing for the priesthood. Hence, in all circumstances, in words and conduct, he always made a favorable impression. "A priest must never fail to give a good example; therefore I must accustom myself to give a good example."

Never were critical or bitter remarks about others heard from his lips. He always took the charitable

view. "I will refrain from contradicting others and be extremely careful in my utterances; hence say nothing which could diminish fraternal charity or which could be interpreted as deprecatory or spiteful. I will rejoice in the good which others do and suppress every temptation to envy." He underscored this latter thought when he reread it later. Soon he returns to the same subject: "I must beware of revealing the faults of others to anyone who has no right to know them, and must be very reserved and prudent in this respect."

He seriously labored to render his somewhat reserved character more cheerful: "I must overcome my melancholy disposition and be cheerful and good-humored. When heavy hours break upon me, I will hurry to Jesus and seek for true happiness in His Sacred Heart."

It is significant that in all his notes, extending over seven years, there is not a single word which contains a sting.

He tried to make cheerfulness subserve the purposes of utility and edification: "I must bear in mind that I must make good use of my tongue, for the Lord will demand a severe account; therefore I must be prudent and always have something useful and edifying in view in my conversation, and this the more because my tongue is called to the same mission as those of the Apostles. May the Holy Ghost, in spite of my unworthiness, deign to give it life and

guidance. I resolve to engage in spiritual and useful conversation; for the priest must do that which the common people also do."

As much as he could, he complied with the wishes of others and did not insist on going his own way and carrying out his own ideas: "I must know how to deny my own will and in all things seek the honor of Jesus and the salvation of my neighbor; I must be able to adapt myself to the will and wishes of others, to overlook all opposition and to forego my own judgment; only then shall I be able to say: I became all unto all men, in order to save all."

The Great Commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," was his rule and norm. "Even in little things I must adhere to this principle, which Jesus Himself considered so important, namely, to do unto others what I would wish them to do unto me, so that the love I have for myself may always be the gauge of my love for others."

8. After recreation he generally devoted the first hour to spiritual reading, or if that hour was occupied in some other way, he set aside some other time for this important task, never leaving it to mere chance.

He discussed the selection of books for spiritual reading with his director. Before reading he knelt for a moment and then read slowly and thoughtfully. Particularly striking passages he marked.

He recited the beads daily, and on days when there was no class, as well as during the holiday season,

he added the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. On class-days he generally told the beads during the quarter of an hour which it took him to walk from the Germanicum to the University. He prayed in such a manner that no one could notice it. He sometimes admitted that the noise and distraction of the busy streets disturbed him not a little, and considered whether it would not be better to select a quieter time for reciting the rosary. But he stuck to his habit nevertheless. It was impossible to shorten the time for study, he said. Praying on the street protects one against many dangers, and one gradually gets into the habit of keeping God before one's eyes, even in the midst of distractions.

"It is no more than right that I should practice saying the beads well. This practice will bear fruit during the whole of life. I will try to recite the rosary with greater recollection from day to day. It will be my greatest help and bring me new graces every day." "If I strive to employ all the little means which I have learned in order to say the rosary, I shall always recite it well, and that is no small advantage."

As a means against distraction he cites the sublime yet simple content of this prayer: "If, in reciting the rosary I have no special thoughts, it suffices that I utter those simple prayers, so pleasing to God, in all simplicity and devotion; thus I shall easily and successfully combat distractions."

9. He frequently visited the Blessed Sacrament

and prayed before it with great devotion. He says: "I resolve to be zealous in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, so as to show my gratitude to the Lord for deigning to live with me under the same roof." In addition to the visits prescribed by the rule, he made two private visits every day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Besides, he loved to say his Breviary, or at least a portion of it, in chapel, and whenever he chanced to pass the chapel door, he did not miss the opportunity of entering and expressing his respect and love for the Saviour. "If we knew that Jesus was to appear in a certain place, what would we not do to enjoy His presence? But Jesus is present in all our churches and tabernacles; why then do we not hurry with zeal to visit Him—we, especially, who are so fortunate as to live under the same roof with Him?"

On his walks he invariably found a reason for visiting some church and never entered without immediately offering his homage to the hidden God in the tabernacle and spending some time in prayer. Knowing that, particularly in Rome, many visit the churches merely to satisfy their curiosity, he wished to make reparation for their neglect: "By my ardor in visiting the Blessed Sacrament and in receiving Holy Communion, and by conscientiously fulfilling the duties of my state, I will make effective reparation to my Saviour for the offenses offered to Him."

Even more than the desire of making reparation did his love for the Saviour and the joy which he experienced in the presence of his beloved Friend, urge him on: "What a noble, faithful friend Jesus is! How sweet is His friendship in the tabernacle! I will visit Him as my true friend, approach Him with holy importunity, and strive constantly to become better acquainted with Him; to share joys and sorrows, good luck and misfortune, pleasant and unpleasant experiences with His Sacred Heart. I will converse with Him with childlike simplicity and unbounded confidence. I will visit Him in the evening to confide all good and bad actions which I have done during the day to His Sacred Heart. I will recommend to His fatherly Providence the most intimate and important affairs of my heart, whether they concern my corporal or spiritual well-being. I will take counsel with His Sacred Heart, as with the wisest of teachers, concerning the things that I must do to perform my priestly and pastoral office well and holily. What a sweet friendship! Is that not Paradise on earth?"

10. With the sound of the bell after the evening recreation began the quiet, solemn time, entirely consecrated to God, called the Great Silence, which lasted till the following morning after Mass. During this period he occupied himself entirely with spiritual exercises. "The beginning and the end of the day belong to God alone." As ductor or prefect he skilfully ar-

ranged things beforehand, and if anything remained to be done, he did it promptly and with few words, which were always spoken in a low tone of voice.

As soon as he reached his room, he recited a short prayer and then took up his book of meditations to prepare the points for the following day. Besides the incomparable work of De Ponte, he used the devotional writings of Chaignon, Lohmann, Meschler, and Beissel. Sometimes he selected his points directly from Holy Scripture or from the Breviary. A resolution which frequently recurs in his monthly retrospect is: "As far as meditation is concerned, I will devote more care to the evening and morning preparation." Perhaps the fatigue resulting from a strenuous day's work sometimes weighed heavily upon him.

After preparing for the meditation, he examined his conscience. He regarded this exercise very highly. "It is useful and necessary for three things," he says; "namely, (1) to know one's sins; and therefore I must not be superficial in my examination of conscience, not even regarding sins of omission, which is a matter of peculiar importance for the priest. (2) To become acquainted with my evil inclinations, also a point of great importance. Very often even pious persons fail to notice certain evil inclinations with which they are affected, and which others see only too well. (3) To discern the different spirits. (Thomas à Kempis, Book III, Ch. 54)."

The first point of his examination of conscience was the so-called particular examen on some definite point of the spiritual life. It is for him "the thermometer of the spiritual life, on which the fruits of the spiritual life must register. To make this particular examination conscientiously is a sign of consistency, a means of attaining sanctity." And this sign of consistency, this means of attaining sanctity, we find to be his constant aim from the beginning of his first retreat until his death. Every morning he asked himself the question what he could do better and what virtue he would practice most during the day, and in the evening he noted the number of his good and bad deeds, sometimes in the form which St. Ignatius recommends in his Spiritual Exercises, sometimes on a specially prepared sheet of paper. "It is not enough to avoid mistakes," he said, and there are days when he has no mistakes to record; "we must also perform acts of virtue," and here we find no empty spaces, but sometimes numbers of considerable size.

He often changed the subject of the particular examen. A man of his energetic temperament did not require weeks or months to eradicate slight faults. Thus he says in one of his resolutions: "I will make particular examination on the good intention I should have in my actions, as well as on pride and vanity; but I will change the subject, and not take the different kinds and degrees all at once, but

little by little. Above all I will see that I make the particular examination so that it is of practical use to me."

He spent little time on probing his conscience. "The first three points (thanksgiving, invocation of the Holy Ghost, examination of conscience) should take less time; the others (*i. e.*, contrition and purpose of amendment), more. In evoking contrition I will recall the thoughts of the retreat; in making a firm purpose of amendment, I will use vocal prayer."

After examining his conscience he made a last visit to the chapel together with the other students, thanked God for all the benefits of the day, and once more recommended himself, his companions and superiors, relatives and friends, the Holy Father, all bishops and priests, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Gladly would he sometimes have stayed longer in church, had not his love for the rule and for good order moved him to rise and close the day's work.

Coassini observed this order without any essential change throughout the six years of his college life; it was to be the foundation of his priestly life, the path to sacerdotal perfection.

Even during vacation and on feasts and special holidays this order suffered but few changes. His spiritual progress never lagged. And yet these days manifest other beautiful traits in Coassini's character, so that we must briefly consider them.

CHAPTER XI

FEASTS AND HOLIDAYS

1. A Change in the Order of the Day.—2. Coassini's Correspondence.—3. His Private Studies.—4. Recreations (S. Saba, Excursions.)—5. Music.

1. On Sundays and holydays as well as on all Thursdays of the year there were no lectures at the University and no scientific exercises. In their place, Sundays and holydays brought divine services in the College church or in the Gesù, as well as catechetical instructions. The secular holidays were devoted to recreation at S. Saba or to excursions, which left a little more time for private study and special hobbies. Coassini sacrificed a portion of his free time to the Sunday School during the first few years.

2. The first thing he did on Thursday and Sunday afternoons was to attend to his correspondence, which, however, as a rule took little of his time.

With his father, while he lived, John maintained a regular, though not very voluminous, correspondence. Rarely did he miss sending a picture postcard with greetings to his father on special excursions. How often after his father's death he was accustomed to

write his sister and brother-in-law, is revealed by the interesting letter of the latter printed further down.

With his other relatives and former fellow-students he had little correspondence. He regularly informed his fellow-countryman and friend Srebernič about what went on at the College and in the University. But these letters were brief and simple and required little time, so that the impression remains that he did too little rather than too much corresponding during these years.

In writing to former fellow-students who needed guidance he was not so reserved. From the candor, warmth, and sympathy expressed in these letters we can see how much good it did these university students to have a friend in Rome who took an interest in them. Even though many of their opinions were diametrically opposed to his, and he had to condemn their conduct, he never withdrew his friendly hand. Where he thought that he could play the apostle or perform an act of charity, nothing was too much for him.

3. As his correspondence demanded so little time, he had a large part of every free day for private study. He attended none of the optional lectures at the University or the Biblical Institute. In the College he had only half an hour's choir practice and half an hour of pastoral theology or catechetics. He studied these branches with great interest. Since

there was no practical school for catechetics, the students themselves had to act as scholars during the exercises. General laughter was evoked when the catechist, in the midst of an explanation, remarked: "Coassini, pay attention!" or, "Coassini, quit talking!" For all knew how recollected and attentive he was. In the subsequent criticism, which was sometimes quite lively, he ventured his opinion only when he was expressly asked. He was very mild in his judgment, first emphasizing the good points and then drawing attention to the defects of the instruction.

In his private studies, he first attended to the necessary supplementary work. His neatly written sermons, treatises, and excerpts from catechetical and homiletical works are still extant and bear witnesses to his diligence in these studies.

Many an hour he devoted to charity. A certain gentleman had considerable Italian correspondence on scientific subjects. Coassini assumed the somewhat thankless work of correcting the grammar and style of his colleague's letters; sometimes he made entirely new translations. He generously sacrificed hour after hour and was glad that no one spoke about it. At the request of another he accepted the task of translating an extensive work and spent weeks and months at it without anybody knowing of his collaboration. At his death the work was almost entirely finished. He was ever ready to serve others, and quite

often he was called upon for help. His notes reveal the spirit in which he responded to these demands: "According to the intention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus I will devote myself with the greatest care to the practical exercise of charity towards my neighbor, and apply myself to the service of my brothers without regard to my own wishes."

4. But in spite of all his work he never forgot that Thursday was a day of recreation. At ten o'clock, or even earlier, he left for St. Saba, the beautiful convent on the Aventine which has belonged to the College since 1573. There, away from the atmosphere of the city streets and surrounded by beautiful flowers, he forgot the worries of the classroom and refreshed his mind for the work of the ensuing days. In consonance with the rule, he first visited the grave of St. Ignatius, the founder of the Collegium Germanicum, in the Gesù church. Then he marched over the Capitol, past the Forum and the Palatine Hill, up the Aventine behind the Circus Maximus, between the churches of SS. Prisca and Alexius, towards St. Saba. Brightly does this ancient monastery on the little Aventine, with the beautiful loggie of Cardinal Francis Piccolomini, greet the visitor from afar. Its history, its antiquities, and the charming view that can be had from its site draw hundreds of pilgrims and archæologists within its walls.

According to John the Deacon (ninth century) St. Sylvia, the mother of Gregory the Great (604), built

an oratory on this spot, in which the holy pontiff often visited her. About the middle of the seventh century, Greek monks came hither, bringing along with them the devotion to St. Sabbas (1532 in Jerusalem). They named the cloister after him and adorned the church with paintings. In the tenth century, the Benedictine monks of Cluny assumed charge of the church and cloister, which were destroyed towards the end of the eleventh century (perhaps under Robert Guiscard). Over the old church, whose ruins still remain underneath the present one, Master Jacob, the founder of the school of the Cosmates, raised the present structure, the pillars and chapters of which were taken from the ruins of the ancient Roman buildings in the neighborhood.

When Coassini visited St. Saba for the first time, the floor of the church was still torn up and the rich art treasures [1] were strewn about in disorder. Cardinal Steinhuber, with the aid of many other alumni of the Germanicum, had made possible the excavation of the lower church. The paintings thus brought to light, together with those of St. Maria Antiqua and San Clemente, give us an idea of the art of an epoch concerning which little is known from other sources. Many new finds were made at this time, for example, in August, 1907, the interesting statue of a barbarian rider with a hawk, dating from the eighth century,

[1] Cardinal Steinhuber, *Geschichte des Kollegium Germanicum Hungaricum in Rom*, Vol. I, pp. 112 sqq.

which now stands to the left at the entrance of the church.

About this time the splendid choir of Vassaletto (about 1180), made of cosmati mosaic, was rediscovered in the shop of a dealer, bought, and set up the following years. It was a most interesting time for all who then visited St. Saba! Postal cards with views of the restored church show the interest with which Coassini followed these excavations. "On this card," he writes to his friend Srebernič, "you can see St. Saba in the old style after its restoration. Twice we have had solemn High Mass in the new choir with the two ambos."

Though these finds were of great interest, St. Saba had another attraction, namely, the beautiful view, particularly from the roofed open galleries (*loggie*) of the monastery. A grand panorama spreads before the eyes of the beholder. Rome, especially the majestic ruins of the Palatine and the Coliseum, presents a most impressive sight, while on the other hand the figures of the Lateran clearly rise to the skies and the springs of Caracalla seem to lie at one's feet. In the distance one discerns the Alban and the Sabine hills. The pleasure with which Coassini always conducted guests to these vantage points shows how greatly he himself enjoyed the view.

But what Coassini chiefly sought in his weekly excursions to St. Saba were neither the antiques nor the splendid view. These were only incidentals; what he

mainly needed was recreation and rest. And he used his time well for this purpose. Sometimes he walked back and forth beneath the orange trees, engaged in lively conversation; at other times he rested under the massive fig tree or watched the bowling in the corner by the wall. He was always welcome there, for he never needed to be asked twice to set up the pins.

He was never directed by caprice or special choice in his associations at the villa. His conduct was guided by this resolution: "In taking my recreation I will never seek human consolation by selecting my comrades or directing their conversation according to my taste." He thought only of making others happy.

Often he was made the butt of friendly raillery and attacks. It goes without saying that he was never offended, but, on the contrary, was happy when he saw the others enjoying themselves, and heartily joined in the laughter at his own expense.

Returning from St. Saba, he generally took the way which led past the Coliseum. Here he had at his left the other side of the Palatine, the aqueduct of Nero, and the house of Septimius Severus; at his right the churches of St. Gregory the Great and of SS. John and Paul. Then he passed between the arches of Titus and Constantine from the Coliseum to the Quirinal, and finally perhaps, after a short visit to the Tomb of St. Stanislaus Kostka, would wend his way behind the Ministry of War to the Via S. Nicolà

da Tolentino. The surroundings on this walk rendered it easy to keep his resolution: "In my conversation I will always try to talk of something useful, and avoid unprofitable and imprudent gossip."

In the hot summer time, instead of going to St. Saba, the students in the afternoon walked to the nearer property of the College, the Pariola. The way by the shady Villa Borghese always served as a refreshing walk, particularly in the evening, when returning from the Pariola. During these visits there was always a display of good humor. At the special festivities held there from time to time, Coassini contributed not a little to the success of the celebrations by his usual amiability and good cheer. Once, at a feigned distribution of rooms, the last room on the fourth floor, towards the yard, was given to him "as a deterrent example for the first-year men." When, after obtaining the doctorate in philosophy, Coassini was transferred to the theologians' quarters, the students asked: "What do we lose in the doctor who is to leave us?" and one answer to the question was: "Mr. Coassini's . . . smile,"—a proof that amiability was one of his chief characteristics.

On spring and autumn afternoons he sometimes made an excursion into the Campagna or to some venerable ancient site, *e. g.*, St. Paul's, Tre Fontane, the Catacombs, or the ruins of the Via Appia, or he used the occasion of a feast or some particular de-

votion to commend himself and his diocese to the Saint at one of the numerous shrines in and around the Eternal City. Sometimes he visited the museums on these days, although with great moderation. He went to see only truly great works of art, and was not interested in roaming about in museums; he sought refinement and knowledge, not satisfaction of his curiosity or of a general desire of having been there.

Naturally, he made the annual May excursion with the whole College. The first year (1907) it led to the Vicarello, a famous bathing-place on Lake Bracciano. This visit gave him an opportunity of viewing from the splendid castle of the Odescalchi in Bracciano the beautiful lake with its picturesque surroundings as well as the mineral springs of Acqua Apollinare, which were known to the ancient Romans and Etruscans.

In the following year (1908) the excursion led along the Via Flaminia, the road of pilgrimage of the German emperors and pilgrims, to Mount Soracte, of whose sanctuary of Apollo Virgil sings, and on whose summit stood the famous monastery of St. Sylvester, which is now almost entirely in ruins. The students took dinner beneath the evergreen oaks on the slope of the mountain.

To the sea, and to Ostia, which lies buried beneath the sand, Coassini and the whole "red" group di-

rected their steps in the following year (1909); an experienced guide explained to them the partly excavated ruins.

The next year they visited Nemi and the Alban Sea.

For some peculiar reason we can find no reference in Coassini's notes or mementos (cards, pictures) to all these excursions and objects of interest, except a few casual remarks in his letters. Perhaps he did not care to take the time necessary for this from his studies, or he hoped to be able to recall these experiences by means of a good memory. We cannot assume that he neglected this opportunity through simple carelessness, especially since he realized the significance of such collections for later life.

5. On the evenings of such free days John often devoted an hour to music. As we have already remarked, he was a skilful musician when he entered the College. Knowing his sure, fine touch, the superiors made use of his musical accomplishments on many occasions. But he really had to be towed. He would not even have used the two half-hours a week which were permitted for musical practice, had he not been urged to do so.

The devotion with which he prayed before beginning to play his violin always struck his fellow-musicians; also his preference for serious and especially classical music. A fellow-musician relates: "As soon as the music became soft or burlesque,

Coassini lost interest in it; on the contrary, he would almost forget himself when playing beautiful melodies in honor of the Mother of God. Once, when he was playing Gounod's 'Ave Maria', alone by himself, a listener said: 'He plays like an angel,' and regarding the 'Ave Maria' of Schubert, which he played the Saturday evening before his illness, another remarked: 'He played it praying, and himself, who seldom judged a piece, declared, "That is really beautiful." It was his last performance.' "

For some time a quartet of string instruments was formed for free evenings, and Coassini was persuaded to join it. "Those hours were among the most pleasant I spent at the College," said one who played with him. "Coassini appeared punctually. It was a joy to play with him, and equally enjoyable to tease him afterwards about the little mistakes which every player makes."

At all the major entertainments given by the College (First Mass, Christmas, etc.) Coassini took the lead. He could always be counted upon to appear punctually and to play his instrument proficiently. In pieces which he had played a number of times he never went wrong, and therefore was favorably known to almost all the visitors.

CHAPTER XII

SEVERE TRIALS

1. Love of Family.—2. Unexpected News.—3. "Lord, Thy Will be Done!"

1. About Christmas, 1908, Coassini was severely tried. We have seen how much he loved his father. Even his clearly known and freely chosen vocation threatened to waver when he thought of his dear father. He was sent home for the wedding of his sister with Captain (now Major) Wenighofer, since various family affairs had to be discussed, and it was well known how happy his father would be at having his son with him once more for a few days. His father, at the same time, thus had another opportunity of reassuring himself that his son had a genuine vocation for the priesthood.

John and his family greatly enjoyed this visit. He entered into very cordial and close relations with his new brother-in-law. An extract from a letter written by the latter throws light on this relationship:

"Dear John! In spirit I have seen you become metamorphosed into a book moth, and therefore commanded my servant, Francis, to be merciful to

these beasts, so as not to transfer your converted ego into a happier beyond by a sharp stroke. But since you have written at last, I am more content, and Francis can again take up his customary merciless battle against those dangerous creatures. Above all, I rejoice that you are well; but if you continue to proceed so ruthlessly against your poor capital and work with the famous Nuremberg funnel, your good health can hardly endure. I, a simple lansquenet, shudder when I think of all those monsters bound in pigskin, with which you torment your poor brain by day and by night. Yet, everyone to his own way, . . . but always moderately, John!"

2. He was soon to lose the one whom he loved best in this little circle. When sending the last instalment of the money for John's board and tuition, his father had written that he was not feeling well, that he was restless and did not know how long he had still to live. But John had no suspicion of impending death. Thus the telegram which came to him just before Christmas, 1908, was entirely unexpected. It read: "Father dead; come home at once." It was a severe blow! Externally John did not let his sorrow appear, but in his heart he was deeply affected and crushed. The following note shows how he consoled himself: "If I am interiorly humble, my heart, even on sorrowful occasions, will remain full of gratitude towards God. Ah, how much the disposition of my heart still lacks when I compare it with that of the

Blessed Virgin Mary! I will try to become more like her by eliciting acts of humility and patience; thus I shall please God." . . . "To serve the Lord faithfully, I will often think of Him by means of little ejaculations, and with perfect resignation be prepared for anything He may send, be it pleasant or unpleasant, if only it be His will."

With similiar thoughts he consoled others. When, in 1912, his predecessor in the office of prefect was suddenly called home and on his arrival found his father a corpse, Coassini wrote to him: "We can well imagine your circumstances and you are frequently the subject of our conversation. But we also know that you bear your sorrow with resignation and that, in this as in all other events, you recognize the adorable Providence of God, who directs us to better paths than our limited reason can comprehend. Perhaps the Lord gave you this heavy cross at the beginning of your Apostolic career as a special blessing; for the cross is the peculiar portion of our vocation, and an Apostolate which begins with a great cross, is certainly well begun."

3. The news of his father's death arrived late in the evening. John heard Mass the following morning and then left for home on the first train. His prefect remarks: "When his father died, he served Mass for me in the so-called Cardinal's Chapel. I offered it for him; he was calm, and fully resigned to the will of God."

His return home was not easy, but he offered up all the suffering and excitement with such profound resignation to God's holy will that he edified all. His friend, Dr. Srebernič, writes: "Those who knew him in his home town, retain in their memory the lovely picture of a St. Aloysius, which they formed on the occasion of his last visit to Gradisca, when he came home to bury his father. . . . The impression which he made on me on that occasion was the best imaginable. I felt sure he would enter a religious order. This conviction was based on the piety and innocence which I observed in him, and on the perfect innocence which God bestowed on him, and which he so purely and piously preserved in Trieste, where, surrounded by immorality, he attended the grammar school, so that God called him to the priesthood, in which state also he loyally followed the call of grace, undeterred by circumstances which draw others away from their vocation."

CHAPTER XIII

A FRIEND OF THE SAINTS

1. Coassini's Devotion to the Patrons of Youth.—2. His Special Love for the Saints and the Beatified of the Collegium Germanicum.—3. Models of Pastoral Zeal.—4. His Devotion to his Patron Saint.—5. His Enthusiasm for St. Peter.

1. Rome, that city of the saints, in which so many sacred bodies repose and so many venerable sites proclaim the glory of the saints, must have enkindled a lively interest in a soul so disposed for the reception of sanctity as Coassini's, and our sketch of his character would be incomplete were we to pass over his relations to the saints.

During the first years of his college life, he showed a very special devotion to those patrons of youth, St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. John Berchmans, and St. Aloysius.

In the very first month his heart was filled with a great love for St. Stanislaus Kostka, the patron of philosophers. Msgr. Jürgens, later archbishop of Bombay, on Nov. 13 gave the students a splendid address on this admirable model of youth. After hearing Mass, on the following Sunday, in St. Andrea

at the Quirinal, near the grave of the Saint, and after having received holy Communion there, John wrote in his spiritual diary: "I will pray the Saviour to enkindle in my heart that fire of devotion which St. Stanislaus Kostka felt. To obtain this favor, I will keep away from sin and use my present state of life in order to imitate St. Stanislaus in leading a holy life. I, too, wish to become a saint, to observe the rules as he did, to prepare myself for my vocation as he prepared himself. I will use the same means that he used, always keep the thought of eternity before my mind, and remember that even the simplest activities can lead to sanctity. Childlike innocence, a manly will! May the Blessed Virgin help me!"

On a special card, which he probably often reread, he repeats a similar thought: "In Stanislaus I admire the happiness of pure love, a delicate innocence, which, as it were, allows a man to taste Paradise here below. I will imitate him and think of his glory. I, too, desire to become a saint. There is no lack of means to this end; they are of the simplest. I will follow St. Stanislaus in preparing myself for the priesthood. Childlike innocence, manly decision, these are the most effective means."

These and similar extracts show that his enthusiasm was not a passing flame, but the result of thorough deliberation, and that at an early age he thought seriously of acquiring true sanctity. But they

also show what a powerful influence youthful models can exercise on the mind of the young.[1]

Besides St. Stanislaus, Coassini venerated St. John Berchmans as the patron of simple, diligent work, and of the loyal performance of duty. At his grave in the Church of St. Ignatius, or rather between the tombs of St. Aloysius and St. John Berchmans, the scholastic year began by a solemn High Mass in honor of the Holy Ghost, and there also did the summer term solemnly end. Here, before the altar of St. John Berchmans, Coassini received the ring of a doctor of philosophy; here he sat before his fellow-students crowned with the prize. He heard lectures in the same university in which St. John Berchmans had received his training. And since, in place of the feast which was celebrated during vacation, Leo XIII had conceded to the University a special solemnity in honor of St. John Berchmans in the course of the scholastic year, Coassini, together with the other students, never failed to avail himself of this privilege by participating in the general Communion.

During the vacation which preceded his ordination to the priesthood, he again recalled the edifying example of St. John Berchmans. At the monthly exercises before the feast of the Saint, he writes: "After the example of St. John Berchmans, I resolve to per-

[1] In the splendid book of Constantine Kempf, S. J., *The Sanctity of the Church in the Nineteenth Century*, this influence is pointed out in the case of several servants of God, *e. g.*, Professor Ferrini, Nuncio Sulprizio, Bacher, and Capitanio.

form ordinary actions with extraordinary fervor, (*ordinaria extraordinarie*) and to employ my daily work for my sanctification."

Already in the preceding year he had selected a few traits of the Saint's life for particular imitation: "St. John Berchmans is one of those saints whom we can and should imitate with the greatest profit. His example teaches us modesty of the eyes, dignity of conduct, control of the tongue, amiability, solicitude for the sick, exact observance of the rule, and the art of uplifting conversation about religious subjects. . . . St. John Berchmans shows me how I must strive for sanctity," he writes in another place, and adds: "As in every great work, we must apply the whole force of the will. We do not need to be specially gifted, for the means, divine grace and free will, are wanting to no man; we only need to use our will energetically. I must exercise my will-power especially when I feel lazy, and in practicing self-mortification. St. John Berchmans became a saint by the faithful observance of the rules, which contain everything supplied by the Commandments and the Evangelical Counsels. Hence, if I faithfully observe the rules, not only exteriorly, but also interiorly, and in every detail, they will become for me an easy way to perfection."

"St. Aloysius teaches me where true greatness and genuine service of God are to be found: in obedience, in chastity, and in poverty;" with these words Coassini

himself characterizes his devotion to St. Aloysius. The splendid solemnity of this feast in the Church of S. Ignazio, the six Aloysian Sundays which he made with the entire community every year; the beautiful descriptions of his life, especially the one by Father Meschler, which he loved to read, directed his regard still more upon this eminent patron of youth. He regards St. Aloysius as the patron of those who take life seriously: "St. Aloysius learned his sanctity from the cross, which teaches the two great commandments, love of God and of neighbor, which we also must learn. The five symbols on the picture of St. Aloysius, the lily, the scourge, the crown, the crucifix, and the skull, shall remind me of his virtues." Besides his serious outlook on life, he had very close relations with the Redeemer, especially in the Blessed Eucharist: "St. Aloysius is a model of intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. What I have neglected in my past life, I will repair by greater zeal. We can imagine no easier and closer relation with Jesus than we enjoy in the Blessed Sacrament. If we always cultivate this devotion, and constantly grow in respect for the Blessed Sacrament, we shall certainly preserve the spirit of our vocation."

Then again he exemplifies true fidelity to one's vocation, its aim and purpose. "Observance of the rule is not an end in itself, but a means of attaining the end, which is faithful coöperation with divine grace. In this matter also, St. Aloysius, with his

fidelity to the duties of his vocation and his coöperation with grace, is a splendid model."

"Faithfully and punctually I must comply with the duties of my vocation, my spiritual exercises, my studies, my different labors, the observation of the rule. That is *the* path, and indeed the only path, which conducted St. Aloysius to his great perfection. I must attend to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and follow them promptly. They may, at times, concern only little things, but it is the will of God that I show loyalty in these, and He wishes to reward me for it. Great things are His work; in little things I have only to be faithful. Whether violent storms or petty anxieties arise, I may and must have confidence in the Holy Ghost, who by means of his grace and gifts can accomplish everything in my heart.

2. From St. Ignatius, the founder of the College, young Coassini acquired something of that enthusiasm for the greater glory of God which distinguished that great Saint. In preparing for the first feast of St. Ignatius in Rome, which is celebrated with great solemnity in the Gesù Church, he wrote in his note-book: "Raise high the flag! Let us do our best to acquire all the virtues. In the interior spiritual life, too, we must carry the standard of the Saviour onward as far as we can. For this, faith and charity are necessary, two virtues for which I must pray. God's greater glory, and the Saviour's Precious Blood are two motives which should fill me with enthusiasm."

"How great must be the glory of St. Ignatius! He is our model, let us imitate him, especially in tirelessly working for the honor and glory of God. Let our work be done for Him! Let us be industrious! Let us see to it that this house be really a house of God and its gate the gate of Heaven! He will surely hear our prayers; for we say daily in the common novena: 'Remember, O glorious Father Ignatius' . . ."

Then he considers the principal virtues of St. Ignatius, his prudence, humility, generosity, unselfishness, and closes with the exclamation: "Yes, man is created for God, for the greater glory of God!"

Coassini gives a special title to a meditation on the feast of St. Ignatius, which is something unusual with him, and emphasizes all important passages by printing the letters: "St. Ignatius is our *teacher* through the Exercises, through the rules of the Germanicum (which he drew up), through his pithy sayings (How repulsive the earth is to me when I look up to Heaven!—We must work as if God did not help us, and trust as though He did everything alone)! All for the greater glory of God! our model of virtue (the spirit of prayer, self-control, love for work), and our heavenly protector."

Similiar thoughts recur in the course of the succeeding years. Here is another specimen: "We should imitate St. Ignatius especially in his most distinguishing qualities of character: firmness in all things, battling against difficulties (especially in keeping

good resolutions), a high, sublime aim,—not only the honor, but the greater honor of God, the right use of all means, both natural and supernatural. If I imitate him in these points, I shall become a zealous priest, such as he intended to train when he founded this College."

Childlike was his joy, a fellow-student tells us, when, on the last feast of St Ignatius he was permitted to celebrate on earth, he assisted Cardinal Billot as deacon at the solemn evening benediction in the Gesù.

Among the former students of the German College are two who have been beatified: Blessed Marcus Crisinus, who, with two Jesuits, was murdered by heretics in Kaschaw (Hungary) in 1619, and Blessed Robert Johnson, a martyr of the Elizabethan persecution in England, who, after heroically submitting to tortures, died a glorious death for the faith in London in 1582. Crisinus was beatified on January 15, 1905, and when Coassini arrived at the College, photographs of the celebration were still hanging about. All the students were filled with holy enthusiasm and talked often and at length of the magnificent celebration at St. Peter's and their subsequent audience with Pope Pius X.

Since Bl. Crisinus had led the same life in the German College as Coassini was leading, the application to himself was very simple: "Through the intercession and example of Blessed Crisinus, I will

live a holy life in this College, so that later I may be a true champion of God and the Church, a priest as St. Ignatius would wish me to be, a cadet of the Holy See. What did Crisinus do here? He trained his heart and spirit. That I also must do, and I pray for his protection in my efforts."

At Coassini's suggestion, a picture of Bl. Robert Johnson was adopted as a First Mass souvenir by the students. The biography of this English martyr (Ehrenborg, *Der sel. Robert Johnson u. die Katholikenverfolgung in England*, M. Gladbach, 1912) he promoted to the best of his ability.

3. As a model pastor Coassini venerated St. John Chrysostom, at whose centenary celebration he assisted as a member of the choir, and as a model missionary St. Francis Xavier, before whose right hand in the Gesù Church he spent many an hour in devout prayer.

"Francis Xavier," he writes, "had a heart similar to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, free from all attachment to the world or to self. He sacrificed wealth and embraced poverty, but God made him rich, so that he could undertake journeys, found colleges, maintain whole nations, and to the present day the Society of St. Xavier pays interest on his loans. He sacrificed the world and its honors, but became so famous that all Europe spoke of him, that God honored him by miracles, and that he shines as a star of the first magnitude among the Saints. He gave up

worldly pleasures and comforts and enjoyed the happiness which only an Apostolic laborer may taste when the harvest is ripe and his hands are tired of baptizing." At each of these thoughts Coassini makes an application to himself.

4. He often seems to have meditated on his holy patron, St. John the Baptist; for his name occurs frequently in his note-books He loved to visit the Lateran Basilica, where he was ordained deacon and where he wished to say his first Mass. In John the Baptist he venerated God's special choice by grace; he prayed for his intercession when, pressed by vocational difficulties, he asked him to obtain for him love of the Redeemer, zeal for souls, modesty and humility, mortification and self-control. His patron saint was to him "a perfect model of priestly sanctity, founded upon that deep humility which made him so amiable and drew such praise from the lips of the Saviour."

"John grows up and acquires the necessary qualities for the service of God; so, too, I will grow in body and spirit and acquire all those qualities which are useful for the service of God. He becomes stronger in spirit: I also resolve to strengthen my spirit, *i. e.*, to acquire all virtues, particularly perseverance, so that, as a priest, I may be able to overcome all difficulties and adversities. John remained in the desert to the day of his public appearance. So I also will remain in solitude, to prepare

myself for the priesthood. And as he conversed of divine things with God in the desert, so will I, wherever I may be, keep God before my eyes, do all for Him, and learn true wisdom from Him."

5. St. John the Evangelist was his patron for purity, diligence, and zeal! He also revered the great Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, the chosen patrons of the theologians in the College. Often, while prefect, after the evening recreation, he had a hymn to these two great Apostles, composed by a fellow student, entoned with the refrain: "O Peter, thou mighty rock on which the Church reposes; thou teacher of the Gentiles, great and holy Paul! Obtain for us the grace that we may faithfully preserve faith and charity in the bosom of Holy Church." He had said his second Mass in the Grottoes of St. Peter and often and gladly visited St. Peter's Basilica to pray at the grave of the Saint.

His first walk after arriving in Rome was to St. Peter's. On the eve of his departure, on the day before the feast of the Prince of the Apostles, and before and after the annual retreat he used to go to the *Confessio* to renew his profession of faith at this holy place. Every such visit was a reminder of his resolution to "increase my love for Holy Church as much as I possibly can."

It would take us too far afield were we too describe Coassini's devotion to various other Saints. Suffice it to mention that he celebrated with special devotion

the feasts of St. Philip Neri, the great friend of children, St. Frances of Rome, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Agnes, and St. Alexius, visiting their tombs or habitations and recommending his affairs to them. Needless to add, he also had a great devotion to St. Joseph, the patron of Holy Church and of the German College. "St. Joseph," he writes, "is the model of the interior life. Jesus must be the centre of the interior life; everything must be directed to Him, and true piety must manifest itself exteriorly through the faithful performance of our daily duties in humility, simplicity, and obedience."

CHAPTER XIV

FAVORITE DEVOTIONS

1. A Solemn Declaration.—2. Coassini's Idea of Devotion to the Sacred Heart.—3. Manner of Learning to Know it.—4. Use of this Devotion.—5. Blessings that Flow from it.—6. Through Mary to Jesus.—7. Love and Confidence in the Mother of God.—8. Practice of this Devotion.

1. On the morning before his death Coassini was unusually alert and inclined to talk. His spiritual director, among other things, asked him: "If you look back over your college years, in the face of death, what devotion helped you most to prepare for a good death and which would you recommend most to the students?" Humbly, but without a moment's hesitation, he answered: "I do not care to instruct the students about the best devotions; but for me the most fruitful were that to the Sacred Heart and that to Our Lady of Sorrows, both of which I would highly recommend to all. I need not explain the reason of my special devotion to the Sacred Heart, for you know it; there is no more ideal model for a priest than the Heart of the Redeemer. The reason my devotion to the Blessed Virgin takes the special form

of devotion to the Sorrowful Mother is because near my parental home there was a Servite Church containing an impressive picture of Our Lady of Sorrows. I first learned to pray and love Mary before it, and this devotion, implanted in my heart by my mother, grew with me and accompanied me all through life. I still love to pray before this picture, and the Mother of God has preserved me from many dangers, led me to my vocation, and helped me in all my difficulties."

Here we have it from his own mouth what were the principal devotions in his life. But had that mouth been silenced half a day earlier, it would still have been easy to find them. True, Coassini venerated many Saints and closely followed the liturgical year. Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, as well as the smaller festivals, have left visible traces in his notes. He venerated his guardian angel and often thought of the Poor Souls in Purgatory; but for none of these do we find so many witnesses as for his favorite devotions.

2. Devotion to the Sacred Heart comes first. He had not cultivated this devotion in his youth, but gradually became so attached to it that he wrote: "If Jesus has called me to the priesthood, I must become a priest according to His heart, and as a preparation for the priesthood, I will avail myself of this devotion, and thereby seek to repay the good deeds of the divine Heart."

3. Here, too, Coassini employed the method which he followed in his studies. He inquired about good books on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart and selected Father Meschler's, which he not only studied, but, in his usual manner, excerpted, so as to absorb its spirit fully. To this he added the practice of the so-called nine services of charity, at the same time preparing a list of practical thoughts for each service as it fell to him by lot.[1]

As a theologian the cult of the Sacred Heart was studied by him with special interest in connection with Christology. A paper which he wrote on the subject, comprising twelve closely written quarto pages, is still extant. It is in Latin and the use of technical terms proves that he had already attended the lectures on the Incarnation. He first solves the theological question about the object of the devotion and adopts the opinion that the living, corporeal heart of Jesus with its human and divine love is the proximate object of the devotion—hence not the love alone, nor the heart alone—and he proves this for the most part by extracts from the documents instituting this devotion. Then he points out the aims of this devotion (return of love and blessings) and adds as practical reasons for promoting the cult of the Sacred Heart the lively practice of faith, its appeal

[1] In the Germanicum there is a custom of dividing the so-called nine services of charity among the students at the beginning of each month.

to the human heart, and the present state of human affairs.

4. How enthusiastically he practiced it may be seen from the following reflection: "As a candidate for the priesthood I must always be a zealous promoter of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How noble it is to oppose to the false enthusiasm of His enemies that holy zeal which springs from a sincere love of the Saviour! Our most edifying model is Jesus Himself in His holy life. Motives I have a-plenty, and they can often serve as matter for my meditations and thoughts."

"This devotion to the Sacred Heart is a source of the greatest blessing, and will bring me rich graces, not only now, but throughout my priestly career, and not only for my benefit, but for the benefit of all who are entrusted to me. What a consolation this will be to me when I shall have to direct souls!"

From this source of graces he wishes to draw for his interior spiritual life: "If I want to cultivate a life of prayer, I must pray very humbly, and to pray humbly, I must always conduct myself humbly. But I must also have great confidence in the Divine Heart of Jesus. That is the path to grace. We are sure to be heard if we pray persistently and confidently. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus I shall find everything I need. What Bl. Margaret Mary Alacoque says of it is only a repetition of what is found in Holy Scripture: I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . .

From His fulness we have all received. . . . No other name is given man. . . . Come to me all. . . .' Jesus places no limits to His graces if we seek them in His Sacred Heart."

He wishes a big heart for himself: "The Heart of Jesus is infinitely large, as appears especially in His relations to the poor, the sick, and sinners. So many Saints learned breadth of vision from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, why should not I be able to learn it with His grace? That is the truly Apostolic spirit which I must acquire if I wish to be an efficient priest."

"To be a true lover of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I must take care that my heart becomes like to His, especially by pitying those who suffer or are in danger. I must choose my words so as to reveal a heart full of love for Jesus and my neighbor, must never be bitter towards my fellowmen, but ever gladly help them in their difficulties and needs."

"As a priest," he completes this thought in another place, "I must be the salvation of sinners, the help of the miserable and neglected, a merciful Samaritan, as Jesus was for the whole human race. But to become that, I must even now begin to make my heart like the heart of Jesus in everything, promptly help those who are in need, gladly visit the sick, devote myself entirely to the children whom I instruct, and pray for sinners. Jesus makes it all easy for me

by saying that He will regard whatever I do for the needy as if it were done for Himself."

In this devotion he finds the beginning of his Apostolic ministry, by aiding in the conversion of sinners, at least by prayer: "If my heart is to be like that of Jesus, and therefore a truly sacerdotal heart, I must weep over the spiritual death of poor sinners, and help them, by prayer and otherwise, to return to the right way and rejoice in their conversion."

From the Sacred Heart he learned all the Apostolic qualities which he needed, particularly for his work of preaching the Gospel, and in this school he acquired many of those noble, beautiful traits of character which endeared him to all.

"Jesus, as a preacher, is the model of all who have to preach. The preacher must not arise in his own name and proclaim his wisdom, but he must preach the truths of the Gospel in the name of God. He must possess that mildness and goodness by which Jesus softened the hearts of His hearers. His preaching will produce great results if the people notice that his words proceed from a truly sacerdotal heart, that they are replete with the love of Christ, intended to instruct and to strengthen. Hence I must constantly strive to mould my heart so that it may become a truly sacerdotal heart, like to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to make the love of Christ dwell in it. To this end, too, I must constantly implore God's grace."

5. Corresponding to his high respect for this devotion was the zeal with which he cultivated it. In common with his fellow-students he went to Holy Communion every first Friday and took part in the public act of reparation. Once a week he renewed the act of consecration to the Sacred Heart. In his daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament he recited special prayers to promote this devotion. Above all he valued the practical exercise of imitating the Sacred Heart: "Means of increasing my devotion to the Sacred Heart: the practice of fraternal charity, the imitation of Christ, recourse to the Sacred Heart in all difficulties and necessities, meditating on the Passion, studying this devotion."

After thus assembling the means of promoting this devotion, he asks the question: "What can I do to extend this fruitful devotion?" and answers it as follows: "The means of extending it in others are spiritual conversation, a good example in faithfully practicing the devotion, a good example in the virtues (of the Sacred Heart), high esteem for the Sacred Heart as a model."

In carrying out these simple thoughts he reveals nothing extraordinary, but only the habitual exactness and care with which, even amid trying circumstances, he put all his good resolutions into practice.

He was extremely happy that the day of his first Mass fell on a Friday of the Sacred Heart. He noted the fact on the souvenir card, and almost all the

souvenirs which he distributed were pictures of the Sacred Heart.

In speaking of the blessings attached to the cult of the Sacred Heart, we may point to Coassini as an example. Not only did he make rapid progress in the spiritual life, but he was eminently successful in his studies and teaching, and his death was transfigured by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

6. Coassini was not only a client of the Sacred Heart, he was truly a priest according to the Heart of our Saviour. And what made him that? "Mary is the star that leads to Jesus, and therefore I will pray her to show me her favor," he writes in his spiritual diary shortly after entering the College. And on the Feast of her Nativity he expresses an urgent desire to be united with her: "May Mary be born also in my heart, through a tender devotion to her, which will awaken in me the hope of possessing Jesus." In another place he expresses the same thought more concretely: "I will daily recommend myself to the Blessed Virgin in a special way, so that my confidence in the Redeemer may constantly increase. Jesus gave her to us as a mother; what base ingratitude would it be not to love this mother and not to have recourse to her in time of need!"

7. To inflame his heart with love for Mary and joyfully to imitate her virtues, he recalls her most beautiful mysteries: "The Immaculate Virgin is God's noblest creature, and truly great in her humil-

ity. And she is my mother! . . . In her we see how depraved human nature is and how deeply the modern world with its cult of Naturalism has fallen. Finally, she shows me my own misery and nothingness, and invites me to have recourse to her."

He delights in the virtues of the Immaculate Mother: "How great, how pleasing to God, how sincere and useful is the humility of the Blessed Virgin, whom the Lord chose as mediatrix of the Incarnation! With her help I will acquire true humility and purity. The Blessed Virgin will be my surest bulwark."

8. His devotion to Mary was extremely cordial and sincere, but in nowise striking or unusual. Every morning and evening he commended himself to her protection: "To promote my devotion to the Mother of God, I will commend myself to her every morning and evening and call upon her on special occasions."

He recited the beads daily in such a way that it seemed he was conversing with the Blessed Virgin Mary. On one occasion he reminds himself: "Let us learn to love the college custom of reciting the beads every day! Then we shall become true priests, apostles of prayer, imitators of the Blessed Virgin, assured of her special protection." He names three causes of distraction in prayer together with their specific remedies: "(a) Carelessness.—Remedy: to collect myself before beginning and make a spe-

cific intention. (b) Staleness.—Remedy: frequent changes. (c) Simplicity.—Remedy: to meditate on the mysteries with the eyes of a heavenly artist. It is a great grace to tell the beads devoutly all through life. Whoever has learned to do it, is truly a man of prayer. If I take pains to apply the little means which I have learned to recite the beads well, I shall always recite them devoutly, and that is no small thing."

Besides the whole Rosary, he daily, in common with the whole community, recited the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and on free days he added the Little Office. Every Saturday he performed a slight act of mortification in her honor, made a meditation on her virtues, or paid a special visit to her statue in the chapel. He always wore the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The feasts of the Mother of God were holydays for him because they were feasts of his mother. He prepared for some of them by a novena or a triduum, and almost always noted his thoughts on such feasts in his diary. He especially loved the beautiful month of May and participated fervently in the May devotions held in the College.

"Just as May shows nature unfolding her charms, so, with the help of the Blessed Virgin, I must put aside my passions, evil inclinations and habits, and lead a life full of sanctity and zeal." On another occasion he writes: "With the assistance of Mary, the month of May must help me to a greater love of the

Saviour, make me more virtuous, and assure me of the protection of my holy Mother." Significant of the fervor with which he tried to attain his purpose is the remark: "I will seek to moderate my zeal somewhat." He actually had to restrain his fervor.

Just as Coassini never forgot his heavenly Mother, but clung to her with ardent affection all through life, so the Blessed Virgin with a mother's love cared for her protégé, whom his mother had so confidently entrusted to her. She preserved him pure in youth, helped him surmount all obstacles when choosing his vocation, and directed him on the way to genuine priestly holiness.

And as in life he had cultivated all devotions in the true spirit of the Church, so he had the consolation of receiving the full blessing of all the Church's Sacraments, devotions, and intercessions in the hour of his death.

CHAPTER XV

VACATIONS AT SAN PASTORE

1. Coassini's Arrival in San Pastore.—2. His Exterior Life.—3. Walking before God.—4. Vacation Visits and Excursions.

1. In midsummer everybody leaves Rome. Many students spend their vacation abroad. Coassini went with the major portion of the College community to the Villa San Pastore on the highway from Tivoli to Palestrina. The villa, which rises over the ruins of an ancient Roman palace, is a four-story structure with a central tower and a lovely chapel, with trees all around.

2. The nocturnal peace of the countryside still nestles about the house and the surroundings when the students arise at 5.30 A. M. Soon Coassini is in chapel making his morning visit to the Saviour, and then we see him walking up and down one of the laurel groves making his daily meditation. Holy Mass, Communion, and breakfast follow. Then the students all come out, and two by two walk back and forth in the laurel groves, or under the plane trees, or among the vine-leaves in the meadow. They recite the Office

of the Blessed Virgin, while the priests and deacons say their Breviary.

Hardly are they finished, when some are ready with staff and campagna hat to make their morning excursion. No matter how hot the sun, they can find protection in the numerous groves and glens. In groups of three or five they scatter; some seek for antiques, others gather stones or insects, others again are interested in the very peculiar geologic formation of the district or go on a climbing-party into the picturesque gorges. Some are attracted by the vineyards, where, for a few cents, they can eat grapes to their heart's content. At twelve o'clock, at the latest, all must be back, "Aglow with joy," his roommate, a bookworm, tells us, "Coassini often returned after such walks and advised me also to go out into the country."

To students who wish to study or write, the garden with its shade-trees and splashing fountains offers a sufficiently attractive place. And thus we find them reading, writing, conversing, or studying according to desire, taste, or need. At ten o'clock, at a given signal, all leave their work and spend at least half an hour in a common recreation, to which, at about eleven o'clock, free vacation circles are often joined.

After the noonday nap (*siesta*) there is again a study period, which closes with spiritual reading. Then all repair to the meadow and indulge in various

games. After an hour and a half the students gather and return to the villa, singing a hymn to the Mother of God.

Coassini could usually be found on the meadow, as he seldom took a walk. He was not one of the best batters and pitchers, but he enlivened the game by his interest.

On Saturday the students went in two large groups out into one of those vast gorges which the elements have dug in the course of thousands of years. Their very aspect is picturesque. High over the bulrushes and the trees, one red-gowned group on a rising jut of rock intones a hymn to Mary, which echoes along the wooded slope. The second group on the other side responds with the second verse. Thus one hymn after another is sung, and finally the "Magnificat" and "Holy God" end the concert. This practice may have given rise to the belief of the Gallicans that the *Germanici* sang vespers in the open air.

3. Coassini every year prepared for this vacation period, and his fundamental thought always was: "During vacation I will try to make true progress in the spiritual life; especially will I meditate more devoutly and draw greater profit from my Holy Communions. Besides, I will strengthen my character by fidelity to the rule, take good care of my health, associate with my companions and particularly with my roommate in the right way, always conduct myself in a truly clerical manner, and make good use of my

free time for study. The vacation days must serve to strengthen my character and to prepare me for the Apostolic career."

The monthly retreats he made with special fervor. During the last vacation of 1909 he writes: "I seem to have made progress during the past month, but not enough to correspond with my good resolutions. I resolve to devote a little more time to my spiritual exercises during vacation, and to make them more fervently. I also renew my resolution to observe the rules and to be obedient in all things. I will try especially to have a good intention in all things, above all to exclude even the smallest sin and to strengthen myself constantly in virtue. Thus I hope to attain the purpose of the vacation."

During his first vacation he chose the excursion to Genazzano, the famous shrine of the Blessed Virgin, for his monthly retreat. "The pilgrimage to Genazzano," he wrote, "resembles the pilgrimage to the priesthood in the life of the seminary. The *end* of both is noble and pleasant. I will take care that everything be worthy of such an end, and avoid whatever is not conducive to it; always keep it before my eyes. The *road* to Genazzano is the broad highway; that to the priesthood also is a broad highway, if one has a vocation. I will be faithful to my vocation and take all necessary pains. The way is easy. I will often ask for the assistance of divine grace. The *pilgrimage* itself shall be: (1) *Pious.* I will take

great pains in my spiritual exercises to ward off whatever is opposed to piety and sanctity. (2) *Direct.* I will always keep the end in view, choose the best means, and do everything from the right viewpoint. (3) With *firm* step I will make progress, take courage, never weaken, but press onward, onward! I will use the special opportunities of making progress."

How earnestly he kept his resolutions is shown by the circumstance that, during vacation, he frequently selected the stimulating meditations on the Passion of Christ.

Besides piety and the spirit of prayer, it was chiefly *modesty* which he practiced during vacation. "Modesty must never be separated from cheerfulness. *In medio stat virtus.* I will not be melancholy. My model is Jesus, of whom the prophet says that he was never sad. The red habit is a constant reminder that we should be modest and reserved." Even in the keenest competitions, the most exciting games, or the hottest disputes, he never forgot himself. No one can recall ever having seen him angry or unreasonable.

His modesty was combined with brotherly love, for the practice of which the vacations and living with another student in the same room afforded many opportunities.

"I will unselfishly help my companions," he writes. "Vacation time, if well employed, can lead us far in our vocation; we can make progress in virtue

and piety. I particularly resolve to practice modesty and give a good example, to be kind and helpful to all, companions as well as strangers." He adds: "I will never quarrel with anyone (unless it simply cannot be avoided), but, following the example of our Divine Redeemer, assume the more difficult tasks myself and leave the easier ones for others."

A particularly lovable trait in him was gratitude. He never forgot to thank others for even the smallest favor. Or if he did perchance forget, or did not find an opportunity of expressing his thanks, he would do so soon after. Thus he acted towards all, but especially towards his room-mate, who for years afterwards spoke in high praise of Coassini's amiability and conscientiousness and loved to tell how he always volunteered to do all the little odd jobs, how he regularly spent a quarter of an hour after confession in thanksgiving, made a note of his inspirations during the meditation every morning, stopped working at the first sound of the bell, and so forth.

Coassini was also accustomed to plan beforehand all his actions during vacation and to adhere to the programme thus mapped out.

4. But besides this daily routine, vacation time also brought some unusual feasts, festivities, and entertainments. The students even elected a special committee for vacation entertainments, consisting of a "Glee King" and two "Princes." Among the numerous

ravines on the slope of the Sabine Hills there is one which is remarkable for its romantic grandeur. Into this the "philosophers" descend and, around a huge rock which lies in the centre, one after another is called to a pulpit fashioned by Nature to prove his oratorical ability by a prepared or an improvised speech. There is no lack of interruptions and cries of approval, until finally the ablest are raised to the "throne" and thus delegated to furnish the necessary humor for the students during vacation as well as in the following year. Returning to the Villa, the "Kings" and his "Princes" make a solemn entrance. There is no lack of laurels. Coassini liked to drive the "royal chariot."

Special opportunities for humor were provided by certain feasts at S. Pastore, when the Cardinal Bishop of Palestrina, Vicenzo Vannutelli, and the neighboring clergy appeared at table with Prince Barberini, or Father General came out for a visit with his assistants, or a bishop or a beloved professor or acquaintance appeared among the students.

The visitors entered admist the pealing of bells and the roar of horns, and were greeted by a many-voiced "*Salve in Domino.*" Then the beadle stuffed the bell which usually gave the signal for study; plays were enacted, poems recited, speeches delivered, and every effort was made to render the stay of the guests as pleasant as possible. During the last few years Coassini almost always helped put on the

plays and often acted as prompter behind the scenes.

At table he often played in the Bugle Quartet, which greatly amused the visitors. Four musicians —"four merry men," as they presented themselves— sang ditties in ever fresh and original doggerel.

Coassini stood behind the curtain as prompter with the same readiness as before the whole illustrious company. "I will consider that no one sees me, and do all for God alone. Human applause is worthless, and can at most vitiate the purity of one's intention; to receive the approval of God, that is the highest goal, since I am His servant, and by grace, His son."

5. But the College not only received guests, it also made visits or excursions. Thus the students often went to the neighboring parish of Gallicano, where they celebrated the festivals of the Church with the people, such as the solemn procession on the Feast of the Holy Rosary. Here they had a chance to observe the customs of the natives, so different from their own. Thus, on one occasion, when the bishop was about to administer Confirmation, a woman appeared in the sacristy at the last moment and cried, "Please wait a minute, my daughter is not yet ready." And His Eminence Cardinal Vannutelli quietly waited over a quarter of an hour, until the village princess of seven or eight years (Confirmation is given before first Communion in these parts) had put on her toggery.

"What are those twelve little saddles for?" asked many a first-year man early in the school-year, when it was still too hot for excursions. But he learned their signification when in early autumn he heard the cry: "To-morrow we go to Tusculum or Tivoli." Next morning early a strange music awakened him. A man had hired a number of donkeys for the excursion and was strapping on the saddles in the yard below. Whoever was too weak for a three to four hours' march or who wished to take part in a characteristically Italian excursion, could choose one of these donkeys and ride out to the high hills in the distance and to the famous places of which all had so often heard. "Thus far," writes Coassini in his first year, "we have been in Genazzano, Mondragone, in the Villa Adriana, and in Rocca Priora. As visitors we had with us the new Bishop Vučić, Father General with his assistants, and to-day we expect Cardinal Vannutelli." The midday meal was taken in a college or in a field of ruins such as the Villa Adriana or the Villa d'Este. Besides these five or six general excursions, Coassini also took part in private excursions through the Sabine, Volscian, and Alban hills, advanced into the Pontine bogs up to the Tres Tabernae mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and on one occasion even crossed the Semprevisa in the Lepine hills and reached Carpineto, the home of Leo XIII.

Besides the classical places of Tusculum, the

Sabinum of Horace had a special attraction for the students, and naturally, when visiting it, they recited the poems dealing with it. All came back with pleasant memories and many made notes and took pictures. Many a literary gem was inspired by these excursions.

Thus the days at S. Pastore with their pleasant changes passed—too fast for some. The students renewed their strength, added to their knowledge, and gained many pleasant remembrances. Coassini no doubt felt as did one of his companions who wrote: "S. Pastore, for me, is an ideal which shows how to combine recreation with progress in knowledge in vacation time."

CHAPTER XVI

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES (1909–1912)

1. Coassini's High Esteem for Theology.—2. His Loyalty to the Church.—3. Plan of Studies.—4. Art of Studying.—5. Complementing the Lectures.

1. "The study of theology is a great means for promoting the honor of God, and I use it daily, Therefore I will avoid vanity and pride and study diligently, for diligent study will be a means of preserving recollection and sanctifying myself more and more. This holds good also for my later life as a priest."

With this idea in mind Coassini, in 1909, began the study of theology, which he regarded as a divine service and a means of progress.

"I must also strive to draw advantages for my spiritual progress from the study of theology and learn how to combine this study with progress in the devout life. Otherwise I might find myself in the same position as the doctors of the Old Testament, who knew the law, but could not find the Redeemer nor save their souls. I must combine persistent prayer with the study of theology. Above all I will do every-

thing with a pure intention, so that the whole day is a continual prayer." For this reason he further resolved to begin his studies with a short prayer.

He studied theology in the Gregorian University, together with students from different countries: France, Germany, Spain, Italy, America, England, Ireland, who had come to Rome for the doctorate.

The first year is devoted to fundamental theology (apologetics), moral theology, and church history. It is very interesting to watch a young man who, during his three years' philosophical course, had learned a practical method of working so as to master his subject.

At the beginning Coassini places the motto: "I will guard against the danger of occupying my mind with subjects which lie outside of my courses, such as writing essays or excessive reading of newspapers and magazines."

After thus putting aside all superfluous considerations, he selects among the useful branches according to the following rule: "In the first place I will always study the lessons imposed by my teachers, and make sure that I shall have enough time for them. If any leisure time remains, I will not fritter it away or use it for work which I cannot finish, but always choose something really useful. I will not neglect any branch because it does not suit me, nor will I cater too much to my own inclination."

He does not intend to leave his studies to mere whim or momentary inclination, but resolves: "I will make a plan of studies which I can adhere to, seek to limit myself, undertake no studies outside of those belonging to my course, unless I am sure that I shall have time for it, and it will not tire me too much. In order to avoid fatigue, I will vary my studies from time to time, and even do a little manual labor between hours. Virtue chooses the golden mean. In selecting any special study, I will first ask myself whether it is apt to be of practical use for me, and not follow blind inclination and thus waste time. First what is necessary, then what is useful, and finally what is pleasant."

He squarely faces the question whether he shall rather seek breadth or depth, acquire knowledge of many facts or study a few thoroughly, and answers: "In studying theology, and especially Holy Scripture, I will strive to go deep, so that I may obtain a thorough grasp of the truths of the faith, so far as this is possible with the grace of God; I will avoid excessive scientific details."

After thus establishing the order of his studies, he seeks a way of sanctifying them:

"If I have no other aim from day to day than to glorify God, to seek to please Him alone, I shall faithfully fulfill the great commandment of charity. Hence I must aim at excluding all self-satisfaction from my

studies, and make rapid progress in knowledge for the love of God and to comply with the requirements of my vocation."

Study means work, and work is repugnant to human nature. Therefore, Coassini reminds himself: "I must always bear well in mind that my chosen vocation is full of work and humiliations. I must, therefore, become inured to work as much as I can."

The Redeemer is his model: "I must work like our Divine Saviour in the workshop at Nazareth. My studies shall not be a mere pastime, but the fulfillment of a serious duty and of the will of God; therefore, I must make good use of my time. Work is a penance which God Himself has imposed on us. Daily work, performed with the right intention, is a continual penance, especially if I often remind myself of this special purpose of work and consider its difficulties and its bitterness."

Thus prepared, Coassini began to follow the lectures of his course with his usual zeal. They were the pivot of all his studies; hence he often repeats: "I must make still better use of the lectures." As in the first year of philosophy, so now again, as the beadle or bell-ringer, he was responsible for the repetitions outside of class, and he was very conscientious about them.

2. In the sciences, there are various systems and viewpoints, schools and tendencies, and not only the professors, but also the students, often adopt the one

in preference to the other. What attitude did Coassini take? His first and leading principle was: "We must faithfully adhere to the successor of St. Peter in all things, even in those which are not of faith, and always stand up for him." He supports this maxim by a reference to the needs of the time and the special promise of God. "At the present time, which is so full of dangers to the faith," he says, "we must be loyal to the Holy Father, not only when he issues *ex-officio* decisions, but also when he gives directions or utters a wish. Let us remember that Jesus leads the head of the Church by the hand, just as He once led St. Peter on the waters. Those who do not adhere closely to the authority of the Church, but trust in themselves, will perish by their errors."

As a loyal son of the holy Catholic Church he enthusiastically followed his professors in their teaching. We might almost say that he studied nothing but the lectures and books of his professors, and that his notes are hardly anything but happily assembled extracts from this source. He made but little use of the extensive college library and actually resolved: "I will consult the library only in very special cases." Thus he was really a *lector unius libri,* a student who tried to understand one author thoroughly, and had recourse to others only when that one failed him. And rightly so; for in the Gregorian University all the professors were men of deep and solid learning, some of them universally known.

For the rest, Coassini had by no means lost his independent attitude of mind, and despite his high respect for his teachers, was not at all addicted to *iurare in verba magistri.*

3. Besides apologetics, Coassini during this year daily attended an hour's lecture on church history. It was the third lecture in the forenoon, and in the summer time it was not always easy to follow the professor with perfect attention because of the excessive heat. Here again Coassini employed his proven method of taking down the lecture in writing, so as to overcome weariness, which was all the more admirable because at that time there were no regular examinations in church history such as there are today. Coassini wished to make conscientious and thorough use of every lecture and was not accustomed to postpone his study of one or the other branch until the time of the examinations. Here, as everywhere else, he was true to himself and faithful to his resolutions.

The first morning hour during the first and second years was devoted to moral theology. This branch he studied with predilection. "I must give particular attention to moral theology," he wrote in his diary, "so as to become a good confessor. To heal the wounds of present-day humanity we must know them. How important for me, therefore, is the study of moral theology, particularly since the present course forms the groundwork of my activity as a pas-

tor of souls! Later experience will only complete this foundation."

The results corresponded to his zeal. He passed the examination in moral theology with the highest mark (*summa cum laude*) and answered all questions put to him so clearly and correctly, that after the session the examiners expressed their amazement to each other.

His professor in moral theology, the famous Bucceroni, entertained the highest esteem for Coassini, and it was a touching sight when the hoary old scholar, on the day of the funeral, after the Mass of the dead, approached the coffin and had it opened once more to look with tear-dimmed eyes at his faithful pupil, who so perfectly corresponded to the ideal of a good priest which he had described in his lectures.

In the second year Coassini began the study of dogma. One of his professors was Father Billot, who was then just beginning his last year at the professor's desk, from which, in 1911, the confidence of the Apostolic See called him to a place among the wearers of the purple.

Billot selected Coassini for a public repetition and recapitulation of the matter treated in class, such as is held every Saturday (hence, "*Sabbatina*"). With his usual facility, clearness, and simplicity Coassini carried out this commission. Here, as in the disputations at the College and in scientific discussions which

arose in private conversation, the young theologian displayed a clarity and readiness which surprised all and an humble modesty which won all hearts. His rule was: "In disputations I will never strive to impose my opinions on others, but always observe the commandment of charity." And even though in the heat of an argument his cheeks would sometimes become flushed and the fire in his eyes reveal that he was a son of the South, he never forgot himself. Equally well did he observe his other resolution: "I will talk little about my studies. If a point is disputed, I will quietly and humbly give my opinion, without trying to show off what I know."

His letters reveal that there was no lack of work in his second year of theology. "For a long time I owe you an answer," he wrote a friend, "but you must not wonder that I postponed writing until vacation, on account of the great amount of work I had to do in preparation for the three theology examinations (dogma, moral, and Canon Law)."

We should do Coassini an injustice were we to pass over a subject which he loved more than any other and which runs like a red thread through his life, from his entrance into college through his philosophy and theology course to the day of his death. It was the study of Sacred Scripture. The Bible is the book of life, the daily food of saints, a mine of sublime thoughts, and Coassini had learned to cherish this golden book. To him Holy Scripture was indeed what

it had been to the great Augustine: "A letter to the human race, written by God the Father with the Blood of His Son, and sealed with the seal of the Holy Ghost." During his philosophical course he read the Bible every day and sought to grasp its meaning and to acquire its spirit more and more in his meditations. The Collegium Germanicum gave him a splendid introduction to the study of the Bible, both in the retreats and in the points of meditation which are given in common during the first year. The practical applications which he drew from them in his notes show what a high degree of understanding he had already reached.

In order to understand Holy Scripture more perfectly he entered with great enthusiasm upon the study of Hebrew and the history of the Orient. For a whole year he attended a class at the newly founded Biblical Institute to study the Assyrian tongue, and the exercise book which he kept, and which we still have, shows how diligently he practiced cuneiform characters.

In theology, the lectures on exegesis and on introduction to Sacred Scripture, which he followed for three full years, gave him new courage and inspiration. He was attracted particularly by the Psalms, which, as we saw, he read in the original text during recess at the University.

4. The appointed study hours Coassini employed to the last minute, conscientiously, but not scrupu-

lously: "Time is a precious talent entrusted to us by God, by means of which we can make great gains. Therefore I will take care to use it right." The examinations show that he kept his resolution.

The examinations which he took for the baccalaureate and later for the licentiate in theology brought no less brilliant results than those in philosophy.

He never dreaded an examination, but quietly worked at his notes to the last day, nay, the last hour. At the same time he avoided overexertion as much as possible, and thus, even in the midst of the most pressing work, found sufficient time for his spiritual exercises, for his official duties, and for the necessary recreation. Thus, while preparing for his last examination in theology, which he passed with honors and for which, at the solemn distribution in December, a prize was awarded him, he often went out to the Villa Borghese, with a few of his colleagues who had already passed their examination, and studied there in the fresh morning air.

"We others," relates one of his companions, "rejoiced at the opportunity of being able to watch him work from a nearby point. His strict order and regularity served to edify us. After arriving at his appointed place, he would hang his hat and coat on a branch of an oak tree and step aside to recite two hours of his Breviary. Then he would take out his note-book and study a thesis. Then he sat down and

read for about ten minutes in the Bible. For this purpose, he carried with him the large edition of Arndt's translation. Then he stood up and prayed. Thus he passed day after day. 'In this way,' he explained, 'I can work all through July without getting tired.' Once in a while we left before he was finished with his programme. In that case, he quietly gathered up his things and followed us at once, but immediately returned to his studies when we arrived at home. On the way home he was always cheerful and content and spoke of almost anything rather than the approaching examination."

5. Besides the lectures at the University, the curriculum of the German College provides a series of intellectual exercises for the pupils at home. Thus there are the repetitions, in which the matter presented at the University is absorbed and impressed upon the mind; they are held several times a week under the presidency of a priest or "repititor," one for the philosophers and one for the theologians. As we have already seen, Coassini was particularly conscientious about this; whether he had to defend a thesis or raise objections, he was always well prepared and soon acquired great facility in the use of the Scholastic method. Repeatedly he also had an opportunity of proving his knowledge and ready wit in the larger semi-annual debates before the whole community.

The subjects which were either not taught at the University or in a way not sufficiently adapted to Ger-

man conditions (*e. g.*, pastoral theology, catechetics, homiletics) were completed in the Germanicum itself, and thus, in the first year, Coassini for three hours a week attended a rhetoric class, to which were later added two hours of pulpit oratory. These branches he studied with special zeal. "We must prepare ourselves well for the preaching office," he wrote. "I will study rhetoric thoroughly, so as to become a good preacher, and to this purpose I will also adapt all my theological studies." His remaining writings testify to the earnestness and zeal with which he carried out this resolution. He prepared a complete course of sacred rhetoric, based on the lectures he had heard, and we still have a synopsis of it in one of his note-books.

Besides the sermons of Segneri, a number of which he carefully analyzed so as to study the Apostolic spirit and the persuasive force of a good preacher, he made extracts of many sermons of more recent authors, a proof that he sought to combine the ancient spirit with the modern form. Like all the other students, he delivered two practice sermons before the whole community every year. They were, like his character, clear, full of conviction, theologically correct and profound, ardent yet simple. He was not a powerful, thundering orator, but an impressive, prepossessing director of souls.

The neatly written sermons which he left behind reveal his practical sense. Thus he says of the devotion

to the Immaculate Mother of God: "We shall practice this devotion with success if we honor our Immaculate Mother with piety and reverence and follow her edifying example." In another sermon he speaks of trusting in Divine Providence in the vicissitudes of life, and shows that the belief in Providence is as solidly founded as belief in God himself, and the objections which are generally raised against it are not only feeble, but foolish.

In a sermon on the Holy Mass as a sacrifice he points out the greatness of the treasure hidden therein, and shows that the readiness with which the adorable Lamb of God daily descends upon our altars, must awaken feelings of confidence and gratitude in our hearts.

He gladly and frequently made use of the occasion offered by the Sunday School of exercising himself in the care of souls, before and after the children's Communion, on the Aloysian Sundays, on special occasions, etc. His short addresses on these occasions were of the same type as his sermons, only simpler and more childlike. "I must do my work in the Sunday School in such a way that I may one day become a good shepherd; here is an inspiration for my future work."

Coassini found a practical encouragement for scientific work and at the same time for further improvement in the German language in the Sacred Heart Academy which existed in the college. It is an

organization of students which elects its officers every year, but functions under the direction of a capable priest. Once a week, as a rule, it holds a session, at which a learned treatise is read and discussed. The subject-matter is generally taken from some theological discipline and is directly accommodated to priestly practice. For the selection of fit themes, the necessary literature, etc., the professors were consulted and readily put themselves and their library at the disposal of the society. The prefect of studies, who was appointed principally for these affairs as well as for the direction of private studies, kindly watched over the preparation of the work. Some of the themes so prepared were later published in periodicals. Coassini immediately upon his arrival entered the Academy and attended all its sessions, and his numerous notes show with what interest he followed the lectures.

During the vacations which followed his doctorate in philosophy, he devoted himself to the study of modern philosophy and as a result delivered a lecture on the psychophysical parallelism between body and soul, summarizing the different theories of materialistic, dualistic, realistic, monistic and idealistic thinkers, rejecting their arguments, and thus enabling his hearers to form a correct and definitive opinion. His critics praised the clear, luminous presentation and pointed out that the lecturer, in refuting errors, had relied entirely on Scholastic text-books.

During vacation the so-called "Social Circle" took the place of the Academy; it was also a free society of students, but with this difference, that its members systematically discussed the social question in all its aspects. The president of the Circle, after consulting a priest appointed as moderator (at that time Father Biederlack), distributed the extensive material over five years, then condensed the matter for each year into from ten to twenty principal discourses and an equal number on secondary issues, gathered the necessary references, and then distributed the discourses among the members, leaving them to their own choice. The resulting lectures were read during one-hour sessions, followed by reports on secondary issues and by free discussions, so that during the five-year course from seventy to eighty sessions were devoted to the study of social problems.

From his first year until his death Coassini took an active part in this Circle. The minutes mention reports made by him on "Industrial Promotion by State and Community," as well as on "Public Libraries, Reading Rooms, and the Press in the Service of Popular Education," to which he added remarks concerning juvenile literature and the question of unemployment.

During his later years at the University vacation courses were added. Two or three free lectures were delivered on practical subjects bearing on the ministry of the priesthood. They were begun by Father

Fonck, the eminent biblicist, who drew from the rich treasure-house of his Oriental studies and explorations a series of practical and interesting lectures on the historic, geographical, and ethnological foundations of the Bible as well as the practical use of Holy Scripture in sermons, catechetical instruction, and ascetics. As usual, Coassini followed the lectures enthusiastically with pen in hand.

But Coassini's vacations did not suffer for all this activity, for the lectures required only an hour a day and were optional at that.

When, after more than three years' application to theology, Coassini reviewed his work he was able to thank God and his patron, St. Aloysius, for the progress he had made. It was probably the last time he entered the Church of S. Ignazio when the solemn distribution of prizes was held there in the presence of all the students and professors of the University. Reluctantly he left the ranks to receive the medal from the hands of the Cardinal, and then, before the eyes of all, mounted the tribune; but he had earned his honors fairly and on leaving the church could send up a hearty prayer of thanksgiving to St. Aloysius, whom he had come to resemble in the study of the sacred sciences.

CHAPTER XVII

COASSINI AS DIRECTOR OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL

1. Duty.—2. Among the Catechists.—3. His Paternal Attitude Towards the Children.—4. Towards the Parents.—5. His Work Abundantly Blessed.

1. In his third year of philosophy, Coassini had given up work in the *Scuola*, as the Sunday School was called. His preparation for the doctorate and his duties of "oberductor," introducing the newcomers to their new environment, demanded all his time and strength.

In the beginning of his theological course, however, he immediately returned to the Sunday School work, and as a new director had to be chosen, he was selected for this office as the one best qualified among the available candidates.

Having previously become acquainted with his ability as a teacher, let us now observe him as an organizer and administrator of the Sunday School. His work was anything but easy. He had to adapt the course of studies to the existing circumstances. He had to assign every teacher to his class and supervise the instructions given. He had to see to it that the

children attended classes regularly and to correspond with their parents. A still more burdensome duty was that of providing at least a morsel of bread for the poor children after school hours and to clothe and otherwise assist the most needy among them, especially for their first Holy Communion. As long as Cardinal Steinhuber lived in the College, this task was not so hard, for he helped as much as he could, but Coassini had to turn for help to the students and other charitable souls.

2. One of his fellow-workers writes: "When Coassini first became director of the Sunday School, we feared he would be too good-natured to maintain discipline. But we were pleasantly disillusioned and felt the iron consistency which, in spite of all his love and indulgence, was in evidence everywhere, the open eye from which nothing escaped and the systematic procedure which embraced all. Towards us teachers he was always friendly and obliging. He never reproached or reprimanded. He did not command, but only requested, and that seldom. He spoke little, but showed us how to go ahead, and this method proved very effective. He thought of everything, and we could always rest assured that everything was well prepared. If there was difficult or unpleasant work to be done, he was always in the lead. How often I found him occupied in sweeping the room or setting up the benches! Very cleverly he always chose the most difficult tasks for himself, and if we

sometimes pitied him, he would answer: 'A little exercise is good for me.' He often reminded himself of his responsibility before God and before the parents of the children entrusted to his care. But he also thought of his companions, who were to become good priests, and of his superiors, who had entrusted him with the office and placed full confidence in him. Therefore he always tried to do his best." His diary contains this passage: "I will energetically insist that everyone should perform his duties at the time and in the manner in which they should be performed."

"He did not resort to innovations to attract attention to his work, but knew how to make good use of the existing conditions. He saw to it that the prescribed programme was carefully carried out in every class and that everyone fulfilled the duties of his charge. He often urged us to pray for the material needs of the school. All his work among the children was sanctified by prayer. When his successor asked him to what he would have to pay particular attention, Coassini gave him this advice: 'Entrust everything to your superiors; do not consider the school as your principal work, and do not spend too much time on it; make a daily memento for its success after Holy Communion.' "

He was always ready to provide a little entertainment for others. If a teacher needed a book, or asked for something for his pupils, it was furnished

without delay, although the Director sometimes pointed to the ebb in the treasury. No wonder the catechists loved Coassini and were encouraged by his help.

3. His friendly yet dignified bearing pleased the children. Every Sunday, at about ten o'clock, he awaited them in front of the church. He had a few friendly words for each, but demanded a strict account if one had absented himself from the last instruction. At the same time he knew how to keep perfect order among the constantly growing crowd of boys at divine services.

When the faithful had left church after High Mass he entered with his little flock, and often led them in prayer or directed the singing, which he strengthened with his voice. His appearance, carriage, and conduct were always dignified, and the spectators were profoundly impressed when he knelt down at the Consecration, folded his hands, and seemed lost in devotion.

After Mass, each catechist took his pupils to class, while Coassini passed from the one to the other, noted the absentees, upheld order, supported authority, and stepped in himself when a teacher was missing. There was confession for the little ones on every last Sunday of the month, and he always prepared them for it. He earnestly encouraged the pious practice of frequent Communion and provided an opportunity for the reception of the Sacrament every Sunday. On

the first Sunday of each month he invited the children to receive the Sacraments in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and always delivered a short address at Holy Communion.

With unwonted care he prepared the children for their first Communion and caused special prayers to be recited to obtain Heaven's blessing upon them. A three days' retreat concluded the final preparation. A fellow-catechist writes: "During these days, his glowing zeal, which he so carefully strove to hide at other times, broke through and communicated itself to the children and to us. Very affecting was the manner in which he made the Way of the Cross with the children every evening. He walked from station to station and on his knees before each picture portrayed the love of the Saviour for mankind in such simple yet sincere language that not only were the children moved to tears, but the accompanying catechists were also deeply affected. I need not add that he also provided the exterior arrangements for the day of first Communion—decoration of the church, invitation of the parents, a banquet, etc. It was one of his rules that a good catechist must care for the entire child."

He never lost his equanimity even in the most difficult and exciting circumstances. His voice was gentle, his exterior mild and pleasant, his conduct always noble. He was constantly among the children, but safeguarded his dignity so well that the college

porter, who often observed him, said he had never seen Coassini unduly intimate with any of the boys.

When the children did not obey, or caused trouble, his face became serious and his eye was fixed upon the guilty party—which generally was enough to restore order. He was disinclined towards corporal punishment and had recourse to it only in the most extreme cases. Nor did he lose his composure on such occasions. "We priests must resemble the Saviour, who instructed men as one having power," was his rule, to which he always added the thought: "I must imitate and represent Christ by my condecension towards the children."

By persistently and firmly adhering to these two maxims, he acquired great authority. "The children profoundly respect Coassini," said a fellow-catechist, "they behave reverently in his presence and listen to his words in respectful silence."

While unwilling to employ severe measures, he did not disdain rewards and interviews to attach the children to the school and to incite them to application and enthusiasm. He placed prizes at the disposal of the different catechists, to be used as rewards, and himself always had pictures or stamps or other little surprises in his note-book, with which he rewarded diligent pupils.

At Christmas he always staged a celebration around the crib of the Christ Child. With infinite patience he practiced little poems and dialogues

with the children, and would not rest till each knew his piece. For Shrove-Tuesday he prepared a dramatic performance and in spring made an excursion with the boys to Tre Fontane, where he directed their games and shared in their amusements. When dismissing the children he would say: "I hope we shall all meet again Sunday morning at Holy Communion, to thank the Redeemer for this joyful day."

4. Such was Coassini's attitude towards the little ones. But as Sunday School director he had dealings also with the parents, which duty demanded patience as well as tact. Many of these children of the street, like their parents, only wished to beg. Coassini lost little time in useless talk. He quietly listened to the petitions of the parents, answered their questions, refuted their objections, and sought their support in achieving his ends. Sometimes the difficulties were hard to overcome. Thus he wrote to a former pupil of his on August 18, 1911: "During the last days of July, Bishop Majláth was here on a visit and gave the children their first Holy Communion. To comply with the new decree, we celebrated a second first Communion on Low Sunday. But the Romans are not easily persuaded to send their children for first Communion before their eleventh or twelfth year, and hence we did not have many of the little ones. Still, in time, we may hope for better success." Undaunted by such difficulties, he persevered in his endeavors and reached his goal.

His noble and amiable bearing, his fine manners, but especially his generous and enthusiastic heart, won for him the respect and good-will of all, so that few parents could deny his request. At the same time he was always cheerful and indefatigable.

An eye-witness relates: "Several boys had to be prepared for first Communion at Easter, 1912, and poor John was very busy. He was incessantly called to the parlor to give information on one point or another, either to the boys themselves or to their parents. He was particularly busy during the early part of Holy Week. It seemed as though the visits would never cease. When John had satisfied a visitor and returned to his room, the porter's bell would call him down again. This sometimes happened ten times in succession. Who would have wondered if he had lost patience? But he never showed the slightest trace of impatience, but received the last student who summoned him with the same amiable smile as the first, and readily went whenever he was summoned."

5. This unselfish devotion to the Sunday School, accompanied by constant prayer, could not remain without effect. And in reality, under Coassini's direction the school noiselessly acquired new force, so that the bishops who administered first Communion and Confirmation (both Sacraments were generally administered at the same time) often expressed their surprise at the pious disposition of the children.

Bishop Majláth of Transylvania, a great friend of children and benefactor of the school, on the occasion mentioned above learned to esteem Coassini so highly that he repeatedly expressed his admiration, both to his fellow-students and superiors. In the afternoon the Bishop drove down town and purchased a photograph of the Holy Father, Pius X, on which, with his own hand, he wrote this request: "John B. Coassini, a student of the German College and Director of the Sunday School, prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, humbly requests the Apostolic Benediction for himself, for his fellow-workers in the teaching of the boys, as well as for all who visit the school on the occasion of first Holy Communion and Confirmation, which were celebrated in the College Church on July 30th, 1911."

This picture was sent to the Holy Father and on the following day it came back, bearing the holographic signature of His Holiness, and the legend: "With the greatest pleasure do we grant this request in the Lord."

On several occasions Coassini had the privilege of personally presenting his first communicants to the Holy Father. Once, on a Sunday in August, some fifty boys were presented, and the Pope gave each a silver medal and encouraged them all with paternal love. He also had words of cordial recognition for those who had led these young souls to the Saviour, especially for "the good clerics." We need not add

that this was a day of genuine joy for John Coassini.

When the time for immediate preparation for Holy Orders approached, he gave up his work in the Sunday School, so as to be able to devote himself entirely to his special vocation. He did not lose interest in the school, but prayed frequently for the children, bought little souvenirs for them in Genazzano and Subiaco, gladly said Mass for them whenever he was asked, but showed no particular attachment to any one boy, nor did he make any attempt to interfere with the work of his successor. He had accepted the office of director in obedience to his superiors, and had devoted himself entirely to it, but when the time came to relinquish it, he placed it into the hands of his successor and left all the joys to him, sharing only his sorrows.

But the children did not lose sight of him. When the news of his illness spread among them, it aroused keen sympathy. A number came to make inquiries and promised to pray for him. His sudden death made a deep impression and evoked sincere condolence. One boy told how his parents had wept bitterly. A few came to see their dead friend once more. When one was afraid to enter the death-chamber, another encouraged him with the words: "Why are you afraid of the dead man? He is a saint!" The Sunday following his death the boys received Communion for him in a body. Their Christmas celebration was saturated with reminiscences of their deceased benefactor.

CHAPTER XVIII

COASSINI AS SUBDEACON

1. The Decisive Step.—2. Eternal Chastity.—3. Exterior Mortification.—4. Interior Self-control.—5. Freedom of the Spirit.—6. The Breviary.

1. The reception of subdeaconship is the deciding step for a candidate for the priesthood. Until then, as the bishop so earnestly recalls at ordination, he was free; but the ordination binds him with chains that cannot be loosed: "After you have received this holy ordination, you will no longer be free to change your decision." He forever renounces the world in order to consecrate himself entirely to the service of God: "You are not permitted to return to the secular state, but must steadfastly serve God, to serve whom is to rule." Holy Orders are "the stone of testimony," "lest perhaps hereafter he deny it and lie to the Lord." (Jos. XXIV, 27.)

The subdeacon accepts the obligation of chastity: "With His [God's] help you must preserve chastity," and, owing to the numerous temptations connected with this virtue, he at the same time assumes the obligation of practising mortification and constantly offering his flesh as a sacrifice to God.

He consecrates himself entirely and forever to the service of Christ's holy Church. To him are addressed the words which the Saviour spoke to St. Peter: "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee." (John XXI, 18.) Now he is bound by the obligation of serving the Church. And the duty of the daily recitation of the Holy Office, which the Church imposes upon the subdeacon from the moment of his ordination till death, shows that she claims him fully.

Since this step is of such decisive importance for a man's whole life, the Church impressively emphasizes through the mouth of the bishop: "You must again and again (*iterum atque iterum*) attentively consider (*considerare debetis attente*) the nature of the burden which you spontaneously (*ultro*) request to-day." And at the end she repeats: "Therefore consider well, while there is yet time; but if you freely wish to persevere (*si perseverare placet*) in your holy decision, approach in the name of the Lord."

Coassini did not need to weigh his decision any more; for it had been immutably made long ago. The first sentence in his note-book after his meditation on these words, reads: "My past life furnishes no reason why I should be called; on the contrary, it is a proof of my unworthiness. At the same time I am very happy to bind myself by an irrevocable vow to the sweet yoke of the Lord, my God, and thus to assure

myself of His grace for my whole life, provided I remain faithful to Him."

With a joyful heart, therefore, Coassini embraced the sacerdotal vocation and with it all the duties to which the bishop refers in the ordination rite; for he continues: "I resolve henceforth in my conversation to be always truly earnest and to observe the priestly decorum, to avoid all negligence in my conduct, and in all humility to give a good example. In my new state of life I will be on my guard against self-satisfaction; and for this reason will henceforth, as much as possible, lead a retired life and aim solely at pleasing Jesus, to whom I wish to bind myself by an unbreakable vow."

Since, in the ordination rite for subdeaconship, this close union with the Saviour and his Church receives its expression in the obligation of continence, he adds this resolution: "I need true sanctity; therefore, I resolve to practise continuous mortification, to observe the vow of chastity to the best of my ability, and to recite the Breviary with the greatest possible devotion."

These are, as it were, the chief points of the programme which he mapped out for his retreat, and for the execution of which he resolves to go to still greater trouble, if that were possible.

2. As far as the vow of chastity is concerned, he passes over it very lightly in his notes. He seems to fear no serious conflicts at all on this point.

During the days of his preparatory retreat, which constantly reminded him of the decisive step he was about to take, we find only this one thought: "I must lay special emphasis on the virtues that aid one in observing the vow of chastity: decorum and modesty. Above all I will keep watch over my eyes."

The significance of the virtue of chastity for the priest he sometimes mentions; *e. g.*: "The priest, bound with the girdle of virginity, must bring to the world what it needs most, namely, self-control and continence. How necessary is it, therefore, that we form our character in the school of the Sacred Heart through observance of the rule, the practice of piety, exact fulfillment of our good resolutions, and study."

Occasionally, too, he points out the beauty of this virtue and the means of preserving it: "Chastity is a part of the virtue of temperance; a good means of preserving it, therefore, is to practice moderation in all things. In this manner one can also build up his body. Another excellent means is caution in looking about, in reading, and in talking. If we cultivate this virtue in our heart, we shall feel a holy horror in the presence of the opposing vices! We must not only preserve this virtue, but it must shine forth in us. . . . We must harbor a strong aversion for everything that is opposed to holy purity; this virtue must constitute the peculiar honor of our state of life." All who knew him remarked that he lived like

an angel among men, that there was nothing in his looks, his words, or his conduct that might indicate the slightest difficulty in regard to keeping the law of sacerdotal celibacy. A fellow-student says: "His whole appearance was so pleasing and amiable that one would naturally expect others to be attracted to this angel in human form. Yet, John Coassini was so thoroughly spiritualized that, during our four years of close companionship, not the slightest inclination of this kind ever arose." In his last illness all were struck by the fact that, like an unaffected child, he willingly submitted to the ministrations of physicians and nurses as a matter of course, although these ministrations were not always agreeable, and that he asked for the necessary services from anyone who happened to be present. "The Immaculate Heart of Mary is a model and a means of acquiring purity; it was so pure in consequence of its union with Jesus. The same must be true of the priest," he wrote in his first year at the College, and we can readily say of him that "innocence shrouded his cheek's fair bloom."

3. Thus he was able to offer the Lord an undefiled heart. He had preserved his baptismal innocence and sought to safeguard it by self-denial and mortification. What the Church in her liturgy says of St. Aloysius, namely, that he united an extraordinary penitential spirit with great purity of life, applies also

to John Coassini: "To fulfill our duties faithfully," he admonishes himself, "we need the spirit of mortification in a high degree."

"If you wish peace, prepare for war," he writes on another occasion, "that is true also of mortification in the spiritual life. The spirit of mortification enables us to perform our duties and to develop our faculties according to the dictates of reason." Mortification and self-restraint make men fresh and eager to work, whereas lack of self-control renders them lazy, drowsy, and soft.

In his practices of exterior mortification he is constant and does not allow himself to be governed by momentary caprice. I must first consider what is necessary, what is imposed by duty and the circumstances of life. For mortification itself, the rule should be: "Do a little at a time, but persistently," and the chief emphasis should be laid on the adverb. Hence he resolved: "I will impose some freely chosen restraint upon myself every day, but I will rotate one with another. Herein often lies the mystery of persevering zeal. Besides I will think of the numerous opportunities of mortification, which I can and must practice in fulfilling my duty and developing my strength." This resolution often recurs in his notes. Sometimes it reads: "I will let no day pass without an act of true self-denial"; then again it takes this form: "I will never forget to practice some special act of mortification to-day"; and again: "I must make good use of these fine opportunities of overcoming my natural inclinations."

In what did these acts of mortification consist? At meals he could not practice self-denial by unusual fasts on account of the state of his health, but had to be satisfied with the days of fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church. To

make up for this he let no meal pass without some sacrifice. "I will always impose a mortification of some kind upon myself, both at dinner and supper."

This habitual self-denial did not, however, attract the attention of others. At meals he took a little of every course and if at times he let a certain dessert or favorite dish pass by, he did it so cleverly that no one noticed it. During the last few years of his course he did not touch wine, but as the temperance movement had prompted many to drink little or no wine, this special act of self-denial on his part remained unnoticed. Moreover, he restrained the purely natural greed with which most men enjoy their meals. "I will not take pleasure in eating," he wrote. "I will guard against this by not thinking of the food I eat, but of my vocation, or the spiritual exercises, or my studies." "I must mortify my taste by making no distinction among the courses. I will avoid total surrender to food by meditating on what is being read at table—or recall some useful conversation." "While the body is being refreshed, let the soul also take nourishment."

Nor could he deny himself as much as he wished in the matter of sleep. He did not even dare to ask for permission to get up at night to study or pray, for he realized that seven and a half hours of sleep was not too much for a hard-working student. But, on the other hand, he did not let indolence gain the upper hand in him. When called in the morning, he rose at once. Not only was he always satisfied with his room, bed, chair, and clothes, but he tried to acquire things that were used and sometimes almost completely worn out. We frequently read in his resolutions: "I resolve once more to choose the inferior and less comfortable things for myself, even more frequently than I have done in the past." Here his love of mortification was joined to that austere love of holy poverty which

our Divine Redeemer Himself was wont to practice and which He so strongly recommended to His Apostles.

Gladly would Coassini have imitated the penitential zeal of St. Aloysius and St. John Berchmans by disciplining his body as they did, but he was not allowed to do so. Instead, he took care not to escape the difficulties of earnest, strenuous work and to offer them to God as acts of penance. He writes: "I will seek my mortification in employing my time until I am tired out." Besides, he strove to make little sacrifices in the service of his neighbors: "Even more readily than hitherto I will place myself at the disposal of others and thereby suppress my own desires still more effectively."

The faithful and punctual observance of the daily routine seems to have been used by him as an exceptionally good means of mortification and spiritual progress: "I will observe the entire rule even more faithfully than I have done in the past, and at the same time remember that this is exceptionally pleasing to the Redeemer and a very appropriate means of sanctification."

4. With still greater care did he cultivate interior mortification, which is the foundation and source of exterior mortification. He constantly endeavored to wean his heart from every disorderly attachment to creatures or to his own opinion, in order to give himself over entirely to his Saviour. "I must be able," he says, "to free my heart from every attachment. If the Lord calls me, no matter whither, I must offer myself entirely as a sacrifice to Him. I must not hesitate, but immediately renounce whatever person or

thing may be dear to me, without considering the weakness of my nature. This applies especially to certain comforts and pet habits."

He never lost sight of the chief aim of mortification: "Interior mortification must aid me in eliminating the imperfections of my character and strengthening my good qualities." Whenever he noticed imperfections, or what he thought were traces of them, he began to correct them. Even in prayer he tried to avoid the consolation which comes from self-love.

With a sharp eye and an energetic will he persecuted the most secret motions of pride and self-satisfaction in his soul. Especially did he seek to ascertain the germs of disorder, the sources of his thoughts and desires. But it is a difficult thing rightly to judge oneself and to gain a lasting victory over one's passions. In order not to be blind and powerless, he had recourse to fervent prayer. "To oppose my inclinations will be possible only with the grace of Jesus, by means of which I will gradually transform myself and acquire the spirit and dispositions of our Divine Redeemer."

How faithfully he lived up to his motto, "*Pauca, sed constanter,*" is shown by the expressions of his fellow-students: "I never saw him excited," says one. "Coassini always had control over himself," says another. "I was greatly surprised to hear Coassini talk

of difficulties and struggles," says a third. With these little means he had acquired greater self-control than others who engage in severe penitential exercises.

5. In reading his resolutions about self-control, one would be inclined to think that a life led according to such principles would be hard and depressing.

Erect deportment does not appear hard to a soldier, nor politeness to a gentleman, nor amiability to a well brought up child. Thus also devout Christians, and still more priests, make their daily sacrifices not with groans and sighs, but with a joyful heart. Those who had occasion to observe Coassini with his lovable, friendly ways did not gain the impression that he was a gloomy ascetic. Nor do his principles contain anything depressing, when closely examined. What do they aim at? Cleanliness, discipline, and good order in all things, in thoughts, desires, and actions, a constant self-restraint in little things, which adds to happiness and good cheer. Disorder is the greatest enemy of genuine happiness.

Shortly before his last illness, on the first Sunday of Advent, Coassini, as prefect, pointed out in the presence of all the theologians that happiness results from loyal self-discipline. "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus during this month grant us (1) true happiness, and (2) progress in our studies. Good cheer springs from the faithful observation of the right order of life. Observance of the rules makes men happy and content."

At the same time he did not forget the other motives of happiness, which on one occasion he himself summarized as follows: "The following are the motives of happiness: (1) The thought that our names are recorded in Heaven; (2) that we are called to a high degree of per-

fection, and can attain it with the help of sanctifying grace, which we can increase in ourselves constantly and without great effort; (3) the thought that our vocation is the most ideal that can be imagined. What is there that could cast gloom over our happiness? In suffering we are strengthened and comforted by the reflection that suffering is a proof of divine predilection as well as a sign that we are on the road to Heaven."

6. The Church could readily place her holy Breviary into the pure hands of a candidate who had broken with the world and his own ego in order to serve God alone, and who had turned his heart like a sun-dial towards the eternal Sun. Coassini had long looked forward to this privilege with glad expectation. A month before his ordination to the subdiaconate he could be seen wandering up and down the corridor every day with one or the other priest, saying his Breviary and acquainting himself with its contents.

We know his opinion of prayer: "Prayer is absolutely necessary for the spiritual life. Hence, we must never neglect it, even if it is difficult and creates in us a certain feeling of ennui. A practical way of praying is to exhibit our wretchedness to God, to tell Him of our difficulties, needs, and whatever weighs most upon us, and to do this in all humility and with great confidence; then we can be certain that God will help us and that we shall enjoy true peace of heart."

Such and similar reminders of the necessity and

facility of prayer are frequent in his notes. He supports them by exhortations to recollection before and during prayer. Thus he writes: "The deeper motive which constantly urged St. Aloysius to pray with such profound recollection, was the necessity of prayer. I must again and again endeavor to convince myself of this truth, and at the same time take care to pray with more recollection. With this end in view I will try to keep my soul in the necessary state of recollection during the whole day by driving away all day-dreams and imaginings and allowing no distraction to arise. Only thus shall I learn to pray in the right way. And this very recollection of the soul will enable me to make rapid progress in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

He constantly reminded himself how much depends on devout prayer and therefore also on recollection and due preparation, so that we may keep away whatever might spoil its efficacy: "The efficacy of prayer depends to a great extent on the disposition of the heart. If I were always careful to have the necessary recollection and disposition of heart, how many graces could I not obtain!"

This respect and care increased, if possible, when he began to recite the Breviary. As a first-year theologian he had written: "I will regard all my prayers as a preparation for the Breviary, so that I may learn, by means of the Divine Office, to make a worthy praise-offering to God during the whole day, as it be-

hooves a true priest. In this, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin may also help me."

During the retreat which he made preparatory to receiving the diaconate, he summed up his resolutions in one short sentence, whose every word deserves to be underscored: "I will constantly aim to recite my Breviary above all other prayers, irreproachably and in a most perfect manner."

Therefore he learned to recite the Breviary with great exactitude, and until he knew all the rules, looked them up again and again, and did not hesitate to approach his neighbor once, twice, or even several times, for help in little difficulties.

He set aside beforehand the periods for reciting the different parts of the Breviary and adhered closely to this rule, even when he found it difficult: "Just as a specified time can be found every day for breakfast," he said, "so it should not be difficult to accustom oneself to a set time for taking spiritual nourishment." It goes without saying that he always "anticipated" such portions of the Divine Office as he could.

We shall return later to the order he followed in reciting the Breviary in vacation time. During the school-year the time-table read: "Prime and Tierce in the morning, on holidays, immediately after breakfast, if it is not altogether too late; Sext and None, about ten o'clock. On class-days, I will go to my room immediately after the noon recess and say Vespers

and Compline. According as I have time, I will anticipate Matins and Lauds before or after school or the daily walk. On Sundays and holydays, if I attend the solemn high mass, I can recite some of the little hours during that time. On Villa-days, if convenient, I will recite all the little hours at S. Saba, or else two of the hours shortly after returning home."

As deacon and subdeacon he did not like to recite the Breviary at Mass, although he saw that these two duties were quite compatible. He gave no reason for this, but we can easily deduce it from his character. Holy Mass and the Breviary, as we have seen, were so holy and significant in his eyes, that he preferred to take time for both, rather than lose part of their effect by combining them.

The place he preferred for the recitation of the Divine Office was the chapel; but when he was told that it would be better for his health to do it in the garden, he often went there. While praying, he avoided distractions and did not bother about what was going on around him.

So as not to yield to distraction during the recitation of the Breviary, he invariably began by putting himself into God's presence. "Before prayer," he says in his notes, "I will renew the resolution to be recollected, and during prayer I will force myself to be attentive."

All the priests in the College knew how gladly and with what warmth Coassini spoke of the Breviary and

how he utilized thoughts from the lessons for spiritual conversation. One of them says: "At dinner in S. Saba he directed the conversation towards the lessons of the Breviary and applied their thoughts so practically to our needs that I followed him with great interest. 'St. Sabas,' he said, 'is remarkable for his earnestness and fidelity in observing the rule; in this we can imitate him. St. Euthymius directed him in self-control, which he practiced every day until his death. St. Sabas was a man who loved work, and in his zeal for souls achieved much for God and the Church. How many of us may thank him for a part of their zeal, and what a beautiful gift of grace it would be if he were to confer his spirit upon us all to-day.' "

Coassini was ordained to the subdiaconate with eight fellow-students on May 10, in the Church of St. Apollinaris. A fellow-student describes his profound devotion on this memorable occasion. He says: "Especially after Holy Communion his face glowed with holy joy, while his half-open eyes were modestly lowered. He was fervently praying and thanking God from the bottom of his heart for the great grace which had been bestowed upon him. His lips did not move, but the whole form of the kneeling subdeacon, clothed in a white tunic, challenged respect and participation in his joy."

CHAPTER XIX

COASSINI AS DEACON

1. In the Lateran.—2. "I will Become a Saint."—3. The Strength of the Holy Ghost.—4. Dignity of the Priesthood.

1. Early in the morning of June 1, 1912—it was a Saturday—Coassini, with eight companions, directed his footsteps towards the Church of St. John of the Lateran to be ordained to the diaconate. In this venerable old basilica, which is, as an ancient inscription says, "the Mother and Head of all the Churches in the City and on Earth." Cardinal Respighi, Vicar General of His Holiness, ordained them with nearly a hundred other candidates from different orders and colleges.

About one o'clock, the newly ordained deacon with his companions returned to the College, where they were received with jubilation by their younger fellow-students. True to the tradition of the house, Coassini in the course of the afternoon made a pilgrimage to the Church of St. Lawrence outside the city, to venerate the two archdeacons of the early church, St. Lawrence and St. Stephen.

2. There, at the tomb of the great patrons of his

new state, the thought that had been in his mind during his college days, stood out more clearly than before: "If we are to become the salt of the earth, we must prepare ourselves carefully for the holy priesthood. And indeed, if we make good use of all the means in the way of piety and knowledge which our College offers us, we shall be truly the salt of the earth." He often recalled the words of the ordaining prelate that deacons must practice all the virtues, "as is proper for a servant of Christ and a dispenser of the mysteries of God."

He briefly summarized the resolutions of his preparatory retreat thus: "At the Last Supper the Lord again and again repeated the admonition: 'Remain in my love,' and explained that His love consisted in acts rather than words. Hence I will keep my resolutions faithfully. . . . But to be able to keep them, I must constantly entwine myself more closely into the divine grape-vine by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

The desire to acquire true sanctity, nay, the clearly expressed resolution of becoming a saint with the grace of God, which is voiced here, recurs in Coassini's diary almost every year on the feast of St. John Berchmans. Thus, in 1909, he wrote: "St. John Berchmans resolved to become a saint, and he became one. Why should I not be able to do the same? I must first of all try to be humble, and then aim at making progress in prayer and mortification. The road is steep

and there are many obstacles; but I must trust in the help of the Lord which is superabundant; on my part, good-will suffices." Soon after the retreat of the same year he again reminds himself: "Many saints had to overcome greater difficulties in gaining the victory than I; they had fewer graces and less powerful help from above; why, then, should not I become a saint also? What I lack is strength of will and perseverance. With the help of God I must seek to obtain these, and then it will not be hard for me to become a saint."

He saw clearly that tepidity is incompatible with sanctity: "Satan loves to tempt priests to lukewarmness, because he knows how many men become careless on account of a lukewarm priest, and how tepidity on the part of a priest can harm souls. Hence we must eschew lukewarmness from the very beginning. He who becomes tepid, is in danger of falling. The devil began his work with Judas by making him lukewarm."

"If the way to perfection is difficult for me," he adds, "I must fortify myself with confidence in the Holy Ghost. His grace is to the soul what a sail is to a ship. This confidence makes us extremely strong." He emphasizes the need of coöperating with grace: "To keep our good resolutions we must develop the will. All men, after a fashion, wish to become holy, but most of us lack a firm will. We would like to attain the end, and do not care to employ the means

—a method of procedure which even the world regards as foolish. I, too, have acted thus, but it shall be different henceforth. Only an energetic will can attain to sanctity. This is true of all good resolutions, but especially of those opposed to the chief defect of our character. Here I must proceed with firm decision and must direct all my actions, even the smallest, so that goodness may become a habit and inform my whole character."

From the notes he made during the retreat which preceded his ordination to the diaconate, we see that this thought was uppermost in his mind: "I consecrate my whole life to the Saviour and wish to be inseparably bound up with Him and His holy Church. . . . With the grace of God I will try to pray and labor with great zeal, so that, after receiving deaconship, I may faithfully keep the perpetual vow which unites me with Jesus."

How far did he get in his quest of sanctity? After describing several of his traits of character, one of his fellow-students writes: "I am led to conclude that our Coassini was a true saint."

Probably all the inmates of the Collegium Germanicum shared this view. A fellow-student, enthused by his virtuous example, narrates: "Before Coassini grew ill, I had read the life of St. John Berchmans, and as during the days of his illness we often talked of him and his example of virtue, the resemblance between him and the holy patron of our Church, St.

John Berchmans, struck me. I was astonished to find so many points of similarity between them. In many letters to loved acquaintances of Mr. Coassini I have confessed that I dare not decide which of the two was the holier. Berchmans has been canonized by the Church, Coassini's sanctity is known only to us."

This fellow-student had discovered in Coassini what the latter had expressed in one of his good resolutions: "St. John Berchmans became a saint because he had such a strong will. I must imitate him in this respect. But I must manifest strength of will not only in making good resolutions, which is an easy thing for me, but in keeping them, even when I am not inclined to do so. I must use my will-power especially in the exact and perfect observance of the rule."

3. Whence did he derive the strength to keep these resolutions? Not in vain does the bishop say to the candidate for deaconship: "Receive the Holy Ghost and be strong." "The Holy Ghost gives us strength to respond to the demands of our vocation," comments Coassini, "since without His assistance we cannot become righteous. How important, then, is the devotion to the Holy Ghost. He will enlighten us, that we may perceive the difficulties of the world in the right light, but He will also give us strength to bear them and to have pity on our fellowmen. The Holy Ghost will strengthen the true spirit of Christ in us, and ward off all disorderly attachments which interfere with our spiritual life and our vocation. But the Holy Ghost

will not only help us to make progress in virtue, He will also give us the strength to perform our sacerdotal duties faithfully. He will help us to bear the heavy obligations of our office. He is our adviser and will help us to advise others. He is our consoler and will put words of genuine consolation on our tongues for others. Hence, in preparing for the priesthood, we must make it a habit to honor the Holy Ghost."

For this reason, Coassini, immediately after his ordination to the diaconate, devoted himself with renewed fervor to honoring the Holy Ghost: "Now that I have received the Holy Ghost in my ordination to the diaconate, I will fervently cultivate devotion to the Holy Ghost."

And how? "Every sin, even the smallest, is bound to displease the Holy Ghost in us. Let us beware of resisting Him!" But it is not enough to keep our hearts free from sin; we must also place ourselves at His disposal. "In order that the Holy Ghost by His grace may accomplish great things in me, I must respond to His call by removing every trace of self-love." When the ground is prepared in this way, "ardent love and continued prayer are the best means of devotion towards the Holy Ghost."

4. "Reflect well to what great dignity you are advancing in the Church!" These words of the ordination rite seem to have made a deep impression on Coassini. He loves to portray the grandeur of the priesthood and to draw practical conclusions for

himself: "Grand and sublime is the vocation to the priesthood. The priest is a mediator between God and man; he occupies himself with divine things and must, therefore, acquire a more profound knowledge of God by meditating on the divine mysteries, praying, and studying. And since it is his duty to proclaim the divine praises in a more perfect manner than others, he must prepare himself to be truly a man of prayer. It is his privilege to praise God in a manner worthy of His Divine Majesty by celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He must serve God in a pre-eminent manner by administering the sacred mysteries. He must first of all please God, but also light the way for his fellowmen by a good example. The good example of the priest is of the greatest importance, an evil example on his part may entail most dreadful consequences. He must be thoroughly trained in ascetic theology, for otherwise how could he direct and lead others? He must have broken with the world, particularly if he comes in frequent contact with wicked men. He needs very special graces, which he receives through a saintly life and the Sacrament of Holy Orders."

He then recalls in detail some of the special duties of a priest and says: "How ardent must be my desire to be able one day, as a priest, to coöperate in the great work of saving souls. . . . Even now I must show zeal for souls by preparing my own soul for the priestly career as well as I possibly can."

On one occasion he notes: "The thought of the priest's duty to assist the dying must increase my fervor in prayer, and the spirit of union with God by dignified conduct and edifying language. What a deep impression the dignified behavior of the priest can make on those present at a deathbed!"

On another occasion he says of the teaching office of the priest: "The priest has a lofty office, that of infusing the knowledge of God and of the divinity of Jesus Christ into souls. What can be greater? . . . In a certain sense the priest is another Christ, in dignity as well as in regard to the nature of his work. How much, therefore, is he obliged to strive after true sanctity!" He supplements this thought by comparing the priest with the Blessed Virgin Mary: "The office of the priest in many ways resembles that of the Mother of God: just as she had to find shelter for the Saviour in the stable, so the priest must prepare a good reception for Him in the hearts of the faithful."

We might almost say that he prepared a political programme for his sacerdotal activity: "I will not bother about those little exclusive cliques which so easily disturb the peace. As a priest I have a far higher duty, and will not stand beneath, but above, these groups. How great is the mission for which I am preparing myself!"

"I did not meet Coassini often, but his personality made such a powerful impression on me that, during the vacation at S. Pastore, whenever it was possible, I

sought to kneel beside him and recommended myself to his prayers." These words of a fellow-student, who was not yet in the same division as Coassini. indicate how the young deacon had applied his high ideal of the priesthood to his daily life and how profound piety and genuine priestly dignity inspired his whole behavior.

CHAPTER XX

COASSINI AS PREFECT OF THE THEOLOGIANS (1912)

1. Position and Duties.—2. His Good Example.—3. His Amiability.—4. His Obedience.—5. His Prayers for the Theologians.

1. Following an ancient custom, the students of the Germanicum enjoy a considerable measure of self-government, so that a few superiors suffice for the more general direction. This tradition, sanctified by centuries, together with the sincere desire of each pupil to mould himself into a genuine priest after the model of the Divine Saviour, is sufficient to preserve harmony and discipline.

For better observation and to ensure a more harmonious and uniform training, the College is divided into two divisions, called Halls, one for the theologians, the other for the philosophers. At the head of each is a prefect elected from among the students of the last year. The prefect has to maintain the discipline in his respective division. His actions and relations with the students, according to the rule, should be governed by a pure intention, firmness of character, and kindness towards all.

At the end of July, 1912, Coassini was elected prefect of the theological division. The assembled theologians received him with loud applause when he was introduced by the Rector. "The new prefect has only one fault," remarked the Rector, "he is too gentle."

Coassini's simplicity, uprightness, and amiability had won the hearts of all his fellow-students. In word and deed he faithfully obeyed the will of the Redeemer. In his diaries we read: "My conversation with others shall be as Jesus wishes it to be: Yes, yes! No, no! Anything more would be evil."

On the day of his First Mass, the students present each young priest with a souvenir album, into which they have written their good wishes and appropriate remarks. These remarks, composed by companions with whom the young man has lived for years, when taken together, often give a striking picture of his character.

In Coassini's album we find such entries as these: "*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re;* may you harmoniously unite both in yourself, in the future as in the past." "You were always happy in college. May you, as a priest, lead many others to enjoy that happiness which the faithful observance of duty and love of God alone can bring." Another quotes this text from the 51st Psalm: "*Ego sicut oliva fructifera in domo Dei.* You were such an olive tree in your seminary life; I doubt not that you will be one also in later years."

These, gathered from a host of similar opinions, show that the joy of his fellow-students at the election of Coassini to the office of prefect was genuine.

2. After his election Coassini at once began to make the obligations of his new office the subject of serious thought and continued prayer. His programme testifies to his high conception of his office and his pedagogical ability. "To proceed correctly in my new office, I will first of all carefully and conscientiously observe the rules that should govern my own conduct." His motto was: "Whoever wishes to guide others, must know how to follow the straight path himself." Not on others, but on himself, does he first of all fix his eye. "The rules," he says, "demand humility, meekness, and charity from me. They do not say that I should assert my authority towards the students by imperious commands. Not in this way will I manifest my authority, but by faithfully observing the rules designed to govern us all."

After thus determining his own duties, Coassini casts a look at the others, and here his spirit is one of charity and kindness.

"All must observe the rule from a motive of pure charity. Therefore, I will try to govern my fellow-students by love and similar means. In interpreting the rules, I will avoid timidity and exaggeration, which might easily become a disadvantage to the students. I will also avoid carelessness in my own bear-

ing and conduct myself so as to justify the confidence which all place in me and not to prejudice the example which I am in duty bound to give. I will watch over the discipline of my charges, not with the eyes of a policeman, but so that the spirit in which the rules should be observed may not suffer. As far as my office is concerned, the rules remind me that I should use manly firmness in fulfilling the obligation of directing others."

He frequently renews his good resolution: "I will administer my office lovingly. Once again I resolve to put this rule into practice with an even purer intention to be faithful and exact in all, including the smallest things."

Attentively and earnestly he watches over his exterior conduct and the interior motives that inspire it, and asks himself whether there be anything in his conduct which might annoy or offend his fellow-students. He regards his office as a special motive for improving his own character and theirs. "I will lay aside whatever may displease my fellow-students and thus try to win their confidence and make myself useful to all."

All his fellow-students testify that Coassini carried out this programme literally in every detail.

3. As a result of his good resolutions one of the new prefect's most evident qualities was his fair, gentle, and amiable conduct towards all. This was not inborn good-nature, but the fruit of earnest and ener-

getic efforts of the will. By nature he was strongly inclined to impatience. "I must make a still greater effort to curb and control certain movements of gathering anger within me," we read in his diary.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was his favorite means of acquiring nobility of character and lovable manners. "I will make constantly greater efforts to acquire the meekness and humility of heart that distinguished our Divine Saviour. Without interruption I will seek to correct myself, unceasingly I will pray to obtain these virtues from the heart of my Saviour. I will converse with my fellow-students in the spirit of peace and charity, never treat the opinions of others with disdain, but gladly listen to them. I will never imagine that I know more about a subject than they do."

If this exterior nobility of character and gentleness had not come from a truly charitable nature, they would not have been permanent. He knew this and consequently watched over the most secret thoughts of his mind and the most hidden movements of his heart, and sharply censured all unkind acts: "One of my biggest faults is that I easily suspect others of evil and give no weight to their excuses. This indicates a want of humility. I must combat this fault vigorously and severely."

But that is not enough: "I must always have a great esteem for my fellow-students, be ever full of deference and ready to help, in a word, conduct myself

towards others as I wish them to act towards me. It is my duty always to interpret their conduct charitably, unless there is clear evidence of evil."

We need hardly mention that Coassini, who, as we have seen, suppressed every ignoble movement towards his fellow-students, was at the service of all and selected the most difficult duties for himself, leaving the more pleasant ones to others. "I will endeavor to be ready always for what appears most difficult to me and I will gladly submit to the judgment of others and not think that I understand things better than they."

Hence it is easy to perceive why the students trusted and loved Coassini. In him they always found a ready listener, a willing sympathizer, and a powerful, unselfish helper. They were sure that whatever they entrusted to him would be promptly and well taken care of.

It is natural to love those who are near and dear to us, who resemble us in character, views, manners, and customs. Such a love is all the more natural, the less sacrifices and efforts it demands. In ordinary life it often forms the foundation of lasting friendship. In itself this love is good and praiseworthy; but for the community life it has its dangers. Others feel slighted and the party spirit is aroused as soon as a group of similarly inclined members join themselves together for any purpose. Coassini purposely avoided cliques. A fundamental trait of his was the

uniform kindness with which he treated everybody and avoided partiality. "I will be kind and patient towards all in exactly the same way, and, forgetful of self, assist all my brethren."

Only two classes of students he favored: those who had unusual difficulties to overcome, and the sick. "I will cherish a special love for those who have the most faults and bad habits to overcome."

A student who was ill for three months tells us of Coassini's attention to the sick: "When Coassini was prefect, he visited me every day. He always read to me the cards and letters which were addressed to the community as a whole, though I would gladly have saved him this trouble. During recreation hours he regularly sent up a fellow-student to entertain me. If he ever forgot it, he soon came to me to beg pardon for his lack of attention. At S. Pastore, I told him one day that I would like to have a student stay at home and play chess with me during the general promenade. From that day he regularly provided the desired entertainment."

4. With great generosity and amiability Coassini combined strict conscientiousness. "When I heard Coassini, as prefect, explain the rules to us for the first time and perceived with what decisiveness and warmth he admonished us to observe them faithfully, I said to myself: he is a kindly man. But his kindness is of the sort which, when necessary, can be stern." When there was question of obeying the rule,

Coassini knew no laxity or compromise. This trait leads us to another deeply impressive quality of his character, namely, his obedience to his superiors.

A resolution made at the close of the 1911 retreat reads as follows: "My higher superiors I will treat with respect and confidence, my lower superiors with unconditional obedience." One of the Jesuit Fathers who had much to do with him, once remarked: "I could not imagine Coassini uttering a word of opposition." His tact often enabled him to guess the wishes of his superiors.

His model and pattern of obedience was the Divine Redeemer. "The hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth," he wrote, "was a life of obedience. From Him I must learn unreserved submission to all my superiors. Through our superiors, God imposes on us things which are unpleasant and appear useless, in order that He may have an opportunity to grant us many graces as a foundation for future sanctity."

Of course, the practice of obedience in the College was to him merely a preparation for its exercise in later life. "The best means of honoring our Alma Mater and meeting the expectations of our teachers consists in this, that we become good priests, who will do their duty wherever they are sent. Then the bishop can use us as he pleases, and we need not fear that any task which he imposes upon us will exceed our strength. God will extend His hands over us and make possible what appears to exceed our capacity."

To obtain this blessing, he adds the resolution: "During my thanksgiving after Mass I will ask God to grant me the grace to justify the confidence which my superiors repose in me, that I may faithfully observe the rule and become a good priest."

5. Coassini not only worked for the students entrusted to his care, he also prayed for them. "All great men who reflected credit on the Church were men of prayer. We must pray much and without interruption. To pray often and well shall be my daily resolution."

He prayed fervently for the children of his Sunday School and still more for his fellow-students. "I will pray often and fervently that I may perform my duties for the good of all." God alone knows how often the Prefect, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel, recommended the whole community and all its members to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, how often he thought of them in his meditations and in reciting the Breviary. Coassini made no record of his prayers for others, nor did he tell anyone of them; but his Mass intentions show how often he asked God's blessings for his fellow-students and their work.

In this respect he did at least as much of his own free will as a parish priest is bound to do for his people. During the month and a half which he lived after his ordination to the priesthood, he said Mass no less than twelve times for the theologians. His very first Mass is marked: "November 1. For the Col-

lege, especially the theologians." He also remembered his superiors. Under date of November 3 we find this entry: "For the Society of Jesus." Immediately after, on November 4, there follows another for the theologians, "that they may all draw much profit from their studies this year."

Besides he made special mementos at every Mass, either for the whole community, or for particular students who had recommended themselves to him or for whom he wished to obtain special blessings.

Coassini was truly a loving friend, a loyal son, a solicitous prefect, a true priest, whose mind and heart were intent on doing good to all. No wonder his fellow-students loved and respected their prefect and that contentment and fraternal charity constantly increased among them under his direction. A Hungarian professor who spent some time in S. Pastore at this period remarked that to spend a few happy days one had only to look up the students of the German College during their vacation. The words he wrote into Coassini's album show that he ascribed to the Prefect a great share of the credit for this cheerful life: "As it is an article of faith that perfect happiness cannot be found on earth, so it seems to me to be a theologically certain proposition that the most perfect attainable happiness on earth is to be found in the Collegium Germanicum. This truth is inscribed clearly on the faces of the students."

CHAPTER XXI

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

1. Exterior Preparation.—2. Increased Respect for the Sacerdotal Dignity.—3. Deeper Foundations for Humility.—4. Interior Struggles.—5. Greater Fidelity in Attending Mass, Receiving Communion, Visiting the Blessed Sacrament, in Prayer and Work.—6. Confidence and Generosity.

1. What Matrimony means to the layman, that, and much more, ordination and First Mass means to the cleric: it is the day of his nuptials with Holy Church. It is a day of great joy and solemnity, for which elaborate preparations are made far in advance. In the German College the newly ordained priests celebrated their First Mass on the same day, and Coassini, as prefect, had to provide for everything.

As an invitation to pray for the *neopresbyteri* and to participate in their joy, it was customary to send printed picture cards with the names of the new priests to the alumni who were already working in the vineyard of the Lord. Under Coassini's direction the students selected a picture of the beatified English martyr, Robert Johnson, a former pupil of the College,

whose life had shortly before been published. This selection was universally approved. Coassini himself composed the Latin inscription and was particularly pleased with the motto: "*Prope Romam semper!*"

2. So much for the exterior preparations. Interiorly Coassini had worked indefatigably for six years to prepare himself for the priesthood, and one would have thought that there was nothing more to perfect. But long ago, in meditating on the eternal truths, he had repeatedly told himself: "All these truths assume particular importance for me when I think of my future vocation." Now he stood on the threshold of the priesthood and the thought of it brought new life into his spiritual exercises and a fresh brilliance to all his virtues.

After his retreat for the diaconate, he did not take a rest and then resume the proximate preparation for the priesthood with renewed zeal at the end of the vacation. No, he kept the fire of the retreat blazing in his heart and constantly stirred it up to greater heat.

What were the chief features of his preparation? They are easily recognized: greater respect for the sacerdotal dignity, increased humility of heart, and conscientious attention to all, even minor, points of spiritual progress. He begins by meditating on the sublimity of his chosen vocation. Following the rule of the Germanicum, "*Vocationem, quam Deus illis impertire dignatus est, etiam atque etiam considerent,*"

he often recalled the grandeur of the sacerdotal vocation and again and again represented it to himself, sometimes in daring comparisons: "In dignity the priest resembles the prophets, nay, in a certain sense ranks above them. What great sanctity does not this vocation demand and what efforts must I not make to progress in virtue! The faithful demand holy priests. The priest resembles the angels, in some respects he outranks them. Hence I must preserve my soul from every stain of sin and gradually purify my desires more and more. I must strive to cherish greater respect for the sacerdotal dignity, respect priests, and avoid everything which might diminish the honor to which they are entitled." Therefore he fixes his regard on the source of priestly power: "As the Father sent me, so I send you." "The greatness of our vocation must spur us on to put aside all frivolity and imperfection and prepare ourselves most zealously for the priesthood."

Besides these texts, which are taken at random from his diary, we find a whole chapter, entitled "On the Priesthood," in one of his note-books. It is not a systematic treatise, but a collection of practical thoughts which he probably reread often, so as to keep them always in mind. To repeat them all would take too much of our space. We will select a few to show how, in his meditations, he made practical application of the truths presented and tried to build up in his soul the ideal of a priest:—

"The Archangel Gabriel announced his message to Mary, and, after receiving her answer, returned to Heaven. Thus also, the apostolic laborers who care for the souls of

others may associate with the world only to attain the object of their mission, and then withdraw."—"How dearly the Blessed Virgin loved chastity! Let the priest learn it from her."—"The first outsiders to be called to the crib were the shepherds; thus the shepherds of souls, the priests, are the first who are called to know and adore the Christ-Child in meditation."—"How grand does not the vocation to the priesthood appear when we meditate on the kingdom of Christ."—"Jesus is the first great priest, and the splendid model of all priests. In His earthly life He showed particular kindness towards the unfortunate, a quality which the priest can and must imitate on many occasions."—"After a long and tiresome journey the Redeemer does not rest, but spends the night in prayer; thus the priest, when fatigue weighs heavily upon him, should not forget to pray nor consider himself dispensed from his Office."—"The Apostles begged the Lord to return to Capharnaum, but He stayed because there were still many to whom the Gospel had to be preached. What a splendid example of apostolic activity! We should not be satisfied with the work we have done, but ever recall how much still remains to be done; we should not seek rest and praise, but work and the accomplishment of God's will."—"From the miraculous catch of fishes we can learn that even the most assiduous work is in vain without God's blessing; hence the priest must never forget prayer and the care of his own soul. Peter falls on his knees and attributes his success entirely to Jesus; similarly the priest shall never be puffed up, but consider himself a useless servant."—"In following Christ we should seek nothing but Him. Hence, in our apostolic labors all secondary aims should be excluded. The Saviour's hard saying: 'Follow me and let the dead bury their dead,' can often be applied to the priest; he, too, must be reconciled to the greatest sacrifices."—"A

model priest is St. Philip Neri. In him we can see how purity in early youth forms the foundation of a pure zeal for souls and of a glowing love of God. If we are ourselves inflamed with the love of God, we can communicate this love to others."

He not only meditated on the priesthood, but kept its excellence before him in all his actions. Thus he wrote into the album of a fellow-student: "Some time ago we were searching for an appropriate motto for our First Mass souvenir. The one which you proposed obtained the highest number of votes, and we shall joyfully see it printed over our names. But that does not mean that there are not other equally fit mottoes. I will give you some thoughts on one of them as a remembrance. Leaving the same altar, we newly ordained priests go into different and distant countries, just as the Apostles left the altar of the Last Supper and scattered far and wide. Hence, it is proper that we renew our apostolic zeal by considering the last sermon of the Redeemer. There we read: '*Posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis et fructus vester maneat.*' Yes, indeed, let us use what we have learned and received in the College, and show by greater zeal and a more profound humility that we received more of God's grace. But our work will not count for earthly ends, which soon vanish, but solely for the salvation of souls (be it directly or indirectly, according to the offices with which we shall be entrusted), which will last forever: '*Fructus vester maneat!*' Let us not forget that the Lord regarded us as worthy of His particular friendship in making us priests: '*Vos amici mei estis.*' But He adds: '*si feceritis quæ ego præcipio vobis,*' and in the same sermon we read: '*Hoc est præceptum meum, ut diligatis invicem.*' Let us never forget this truth. We studied together and received Holy Orders at the same time. Let us remain united in true apostolic love and let

this fraternal charity between us nourish our charity towards all our fellowmen and serve as a model to them."

3. Thus he always keeps the dignity of the priesthood before his eyes. The conclusions were clear to him: "The priesthood is an exalted state! A tall building needs a solid foundation, which can only be made by digging deep into the earth. Thus the structure of my priesthood must be founded on humility, and if I have not this deep and solid foundation, I am in constant danger." For this reason he emphasizes the thought: "Under all circumstances I must make great progress in humility and never cease to strive for this virtue. It will bring peace of mind and secure rapid progress. As long as I seek myself, I shall not have great success in my apostolic labors. But he who seeks only the honor of God and the salvation of souls will make a deep impressin on the people both by word and example. How can I hope to find true peace of mind and to make real progress, if I do not apply all my strength, and with the help of God try to extinguish pride and vanity in my soul? To this task I must first of all apply myself, overcome vanity and become truly humble; thus, with the grace of God, I will prepare myself in the right way for the priesthood. I will constantly pray to the Sacred Heart for greater humility and do my best to practice it." What means does he resolve to apply in the acquisition of this important virtue? We marvel when we read this simple statement: "Means which will infallibly overcome disorderly self-love: (a) to perform my duties faithfully; (b) to do the will of others, so far as it is not unreasonable, rather than my own (this applies especially to superiors whom we are obliged to obey); (c) to investigate where pride tries to assert itself and to combat it energetically."—Complementing this thought he adds: "A good practice for humility consists in the continued ex-

ercise of charity towards one's neighbors, in judging them kindly, and in subordinating ourselves to others."

4. By the energetic application of these simple means Coassini refined his character. He seems to have been troubled little with sensual temptations. A pure youth, happy natural endowments, careful vigilance, but especially the exact division of the day and his serious application to work, as well as frequent prayer and great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary rendered the combat for chastity easy for him. Richly endowed with gifts of mind and heart, however, he belonged to those natures in which pride easily finds nourishment. He valiantly fought against this, his predominant fault, during the entire time of his preparation for the priesthood and finally conquered it, as his notes clearly show. Those who associated with Coassini, even if only for a short time, soon noticed that he was one of those noble souls who do not seek themselves, but only God and Heaven. But the conquered foe still breathed and there remained evident signs of vanity. The energy with which Coassini repulsed all attacks and the care with which he recognized and suppressed the smallest movements which others do not even notice, are among the noblest and most attractive traits of his character. They reveal themselves in the firm "I will—I will not," which constantly recurs. "A certain complacency constantly sneaks in to disturb my purity of intention. I *will* uproot it."

When his imagination recalled his creditable performances and tried to charm him by portraying a brilliant future career, he energetically declared: "I will not elevate myself by thinking of great deeds, nor strive to picture myself as great in anything. If I sought greatness, I should be despicable and worthy of ridicule in the eyes of God." At the same time he did not underestimate his talents:

"The realization that I know much shall not rob me of my simplicity of heart, for if I lose this simplicity, I cannot please God, who loves the simple and uses them to accomplish great things."

Equally direct was his reply to thoughts of vanity that arose when he had succeeded in anything: "If I am successful in anything, or do anything well, I will guard myself against that personal satisfaction which often knocks at my door, and instead, will thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus and humiliate myself before God." On the very steps of the sanctuary he utters his energetic "I will not" in order to repel all temptations of the enemy, who wished to decrease his merits by self-complacency: "I will not admit a certain vain self-satisfaction in my holy orders, but exclude all self-complacency. Let it be our joy that our names are written in Heaven. I will remain in obscurity. Self-satisfaction over progress and success in prayer or the spiritual life is foolish. Everything comes from God. Hence I must strive after genuine humility. Not choose a few special practices of piety through selfishness, but humbly keep true progress before my eyes." Since humility does not weaken one's strength, but ennobles and purifies virtue, he would not permit himself to be restrained from sincere efforts: "I must beware lest the tempter lead me astray by the semblance of humility and induce me to work less diligently at progress in little things. We must do one thing, but not neglect the other."

Sometimes the attacks were covert and could only be detected by a spiritually enlightened man. "Quietly rejoice in your success," said the tempter; "that will inspire you with new enthusiasm and lead you onward; by making use of these natural joys you can accomplish greater things for the honor of God." Coassini answered: "I must take care not to show enthusiasm when the results are favorable,

for such an enthusiasm would not be entirely pure. Rather I will seek to ennoble my intention when results are bad."

If the tempter left him in peace in his usual daily routine, he immediately began with self-complacent insinuations when a learned disputation was to be held or some extra fine music provided for an unusual occasion. But Coassini knew and employed an effective antidote: "Before undertaking any work of special importance, I will say a special prayer."

He promptly opposed the proximate temptation of ingratiating himself with the students in his position of prefect: "I will let no disorderly desire urge me to show off in my position. I do not wish it to be known that I have done this or that, but will always strive to be humble, even though dignified, in my appearance." And he immediately adds a powerful motive: "In order to perform my duties for the good of all, I must have a truly humble opinion of myself." Hence, he refuses to think of his own actions, but rejoices in the good deeds of others: "If I were to glory in the good I have done, I should endanger myself. On the contrary, I should rejoice and be interested in the good deeds of others."

How far he had progressed in humility is revealed by a little incident that happened during vacation. "One evening, when all the Fathers were sitting together in the recreation room, Prefect Coassini came as usual to get the students' mail. It so happened that the proofs of the First Mass cards had just arrived for correction. They were passed around, and one of the Fathers, after reading the text, remarked: "The Latin is not exactly classical." Although Coassini, who

usually stood modestly on one side, had not been spoken to and hence could easily have kept quiet, he nevertheless, against his custom, immediately advanced and admitted before all the priests that the poor Latin was his work and promised that it would be improved."

5. Besides correcting his faults, Coassini, as a proximate preparation for Holy Orders, tried to perfect all his actions.

St. John Berchmans once observed that for him the greatest penance did not consist in severe discipline, nor in wearing a penitential belt, but in the exact and faithful observance of the order of the day: "My greatest penance is the community life." Coassini made this his penance also and did not select any other special practice. "I resolve, after the example of St. John Berchmans, to perform my ordinary duties, daily work and prayer, extraordinarily well (*i. e.*, with special attention, punctuality, and exactitude) and to apply the ordinary means for my sanctification." And later he adds: "I will not become attached to a series of special devotions, as if I were seeking perfection in them; but will rather lay the main emphasis on the community exercises, on humility and fraternal charity, and carefully avoid all offenses against these virtues."

First among the community exercises he names the Mass, Communion, and prayer:

"To prepare myself for the priesthood in a worthy

manner I will always attend Mass devoutly and receive Holy Communion. *There* lies a hidden treasure of infinite value, *there* I will partake of the fruits of the Redemption." Hence he resolves to prepare himself well for Communion every day: "I will try to prepare myself with the greatest possible fervor in the evening, and whenever I receive the Saviour in Holy Communion, I will devote the whole forenoon to thanksgiving. I will always offer a pure heart to my Redeemer in Holy Communion, and seek to repair by my fervor the coldness of so many Christians. This practice of atoning love is a good preparation for the priesthood."

The reception of Holy Communion was supplemented by frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament as well as by persevering and fervent prayer: "Prayer is the breath of the soul, and through it we inhale the healthy air of grace. I always pray with my heart whenever I perform my duties; I think of God before I begin and resolve to avoid all that can displease Him. . . . Satan tries to persuade me to shorten the time of prayer, but I will endeavor to make my meditations and my daily examination of conscience with even greater care. I will also oppose distractions still more energetically, yet will not nervously dread them, but fight them as well as I can. If I avoid wilful distractions during the day, their images will disappear from my imagination during prayer, and the good thoughts which I have read or heard will take their

place." On another page he says: "We must beware as much as possible of distractions in prayer; for they render our heart similar to the rocky path on which the seed of God's grace falls, but does not sprout. Hence I must beware of vain curiosity, watch over my eyes, love solitude, and avoid idle gossip."

Besides the "Our Father," on which he frequently meditated, Coassini's model prayer was that of the leper: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "This," he says, "is veritably a model prayer! It is inspired by confidence. Let us never forget how powerful a person is when he was the true faith. Then also, a model prayer must breathe resignation to God's holy will, humility, and reverence."

When God did not hear him as soon as he wished, Coassini continued to pray with deeper humility and greater confidence: "I will always be humble, so as to obtain that for which I ask; I will humiliate myself in prayer before God. I do not always obtain what I ask for, and sometimes I might almost say that He dismisses me curtly and humiliates me; but it is all for my good, in order that I may continue to pray more earnestly. I will repeat the same petition more insistently and perseveringly. There will be no lack of difficulties and sorrows. When these come, I will pray with the Saviour in the Garden of Olives, and thus strengthen my will by prayer."

In his letters he often asks his friends for their

prayers: "Please do not forget us deacons, who need special help just now."

As in prayer, so he wishes also to proceed in his work—quietly, unnoticed, but conscientiously and with perfect self-control: "In my studies, in the duties of my office, as well as in everything else, I will begin at the proper time, go ahead rapidly but thoughtfully, and joyfully start with whatever I find most difficult. In studying I will choose first what I like least, or work according to the method which suits me least, provided it is of greater utility or desired by my superiors. I will work still more diligently this year and will try to draw more profit from my studies for my future sermons."

"This is not the time for gathering praise, but for working earnestly. We are here on earth not to enjoy ourselves, but to practice mortification; not to rest, but to work. We shall enjoy praise, rest, and happiness one day in our heavenly fatherland." These words could serve as a motto for his last vacation, complemented by the thought: "I will avoid all vain amusements and eschew effeminacy, and instead, practice the meekness which attracted everybody to Jesus."—"I will be ever ready to do everything for Jesus and to forego all comforts for His sake; I will direct my gaze not upon what I possess, but on the apostolic work I have undertaken, and on spiritual blessings."

6. In carrying out these resolutions Coassini was not petty or narrow-minded, although he had to be more on his guard against these faults than against serious errors: "I resolve to be on my guard against scrupulousness and excesses. . . . Scruples, uncertainty, indecision, confusion, etc., are not good signs; I must aim at doing the will of God with an upright and humble heart."

When he was forgetful or made a slight mistake (which rarely happened) he was generous and full of confidence: "If through human weakness I forgot something or did not do as well as I might have in administering my office, I must in all humility admit my weakness, but not become worried or discouraged; on the contrary, I must trust so much more in God, who in His infinite goodness can repair my mistakes, nay, will give more than I have reason to expect."

Such was his proximate preparation during vacation time, thorough and earnest, plain and simple, like his character.

He does not practice exceptional fasts and works of penance or recite extraordinary prayers, but simply resolves: "I will pass a joyful vacation; hear Mass with great devotion every day, receive Holy Communion as worthily as possible, sometimes pour out my heart to my Saviour before the Blessed Sacrament, and say my other prayers with as much confidence and recollection as I can command. Finally, I will

perform all my duties well and punctually, but without anxiety." These resolutions he kept faithfully and thus became worthy of the great grace of Holy Orders.

CHAPTER XXII

COASSINI'S ORDINATION AND FIRST MASS (1912)

1. Last Retreat.—2. Holy Orders.—3. First Mass.

1. The days at S. Pastore were drawing to an end. On October 15 the students began the return journey. While most of the others made the journey wholly or partly on foot, Coassini took the train, so as to be home in time for making arrangements and in order not to be disturbed during the retreat which constituted the final and direct preparation for his ordination to the priesthood.

During these holy exercises all his thoughts were naturally enough directed at the high end at which he was aiming. The first meditation dealt with the fundamental truth that we belong entirely to God. He indicates its fruit in these words: "In the sacerdotal state, more than in any other, I must constantly seek the honor of God, my own salvation and that of others. I will, therefore, avoid egotism and earnestly strive to put aside all pleasure in even legitimate amusements by means of the ordinary small but continued mortifications." What moved him to this we

see from the following explanation: "What great things the Lord did in His infinite goodness for man, by calling him, not to the beatitude of the angels, but to the beatific vision of His own essence! Let us forget what lies behind us and with a joyful heart hurry along the way that stretches out before us; for the Lord, who promised us such great things, has enlarged our hearts. But let us also, with all our strength, seek the salvation of others."

Why? "Is it a small thing to snatch souls from the abyss of hell? God, by imparting to me Holy Orders, lays into my hands the salvation of many souls; for by his eternal decree he has determined to save men by means of men."

"No one knows what God would make of me if I were to resign myself entirely to His ineffable mercy; no earthly good shall restrain me from throwing myself unreservedly into His arms. How just and meet it is that we should follow the invitation of Christ like the Apostles and entirely renounce our own will, even in little things. I have left all for the sake of Jesus and now I will resign myself more completely to Him. It is just, for there is a question of God's service, but also because the Redeemer wishes to accomplish great things through us, namely, save many souls, whose eternal salvation is worth much more than this wretched world."

To seek strength and perseverance in living up to his resolutions, he resolved to keep the sufferings of

Christ always before his eyes, especially during the celebration of Holy Mass: "I resolve always to picture to myself the suffering Saviour while preparing for the Holy Sacrifice or while making my thanksgiving; thus I will obtain strength and courage to meet difficulties and repel attacks, to combat sloth and vanity, and to assume all, even the most burdensome, duties for Jesus. . . . During holy Mass I will constantly remind myself that I am taking the place of Christ and, therefore, prepare myself with humility and love."

An act of purest love and perfect resignation forms the conclusion of his resolutions, being, as it were, the fruit of his retreat: "To work for Him, to suffer for Him, and to seek Him alone in everything, is my whole vocation, and if I were ever again to seek myself or the world in the smallest matter, I should be on the wrong road."

Thus his heart was prepared for the great day, which was to be inscribed in golden letters into the book of his life, and joyfully did he await the blessings of the Lord.

The retreat closed with a solemn *Te Deum* on the morning of October 26.

2. Now it devolved upon Coassini to preserve his peace of heart as perfectly as possible and at the same time to discharge his duties as prefect. In solving this problem he showed himself a real master.

On October 28, 1912, Cardinal Respighi ordained ninety-three subjects from various colleges and

Orders;—some received minor orders, some subdeaconship, some deaconship, and some the sacred priesthood.

John Coassini kneels before the bishop, who imposes both hands on his head. Heavenly graces in abundance are poured down upon him. His superiors, as well as other priests present, impose hands upon him. The renewed imposition of hands renews the impression in his heart. He has received the sacerdotal character, now follows the priestly equipment. The bishop crosses the stole on his breast: "Receive the yoke of the Lord, but know that His yoke is sweet and His burden light." He clothes him in the chasuble which signifies love. While the bishop clothes the other young priests, Coassini has time to recall the goodness of the Saviour and to pray for an increase of love. Then follows the *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the consecration of his hands with holy oil. Finally the bishop gives him the chalice with the Sacred Host. Kneeling, he receives it reverently into his consecrated hands and hears the words: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Mass." Immediately he begins, together with the bishop, to offer up his First Mass to the Lord; for the first time in his life he consecrates the species and receives the Saviour, whom his word has called down from Heaven.

And meanwhile, what is happening in his heart? How does he pass the day?

"I will not be unduly agitated on this day, but

seek solitude as much as possible and give free rein to my devotion." This was the resolution he had taken during the retreat.

The ordination rite lasted from 7:30 to 11 o'clock. Then all withdrew; only one reappeared immediately and prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, which is kept on the altar of Our Lady; he knelt immovable as a statue, his eyes fixed on the tabernacle. What had the young priest to tell the great High Priest? How long did he kneel thus? Had he taken any nourishment? How often did he return to the same place during the day? The angels might perhaps be able to answer these questions, but we can only guess the truth in the light of the following resolution, which he had made during his retreat: "I will place the chief emphasis on the community exercises and avoid the illusions in which I was caught respecting private devotions; only in this way shall I be able to lead a life which will really be worthy of a priest. But if a fit opportunity presents itself, I will give myself up entirely to private devotion, even if it demands great sacrifices. The days of ordination and First Mass offer such an opportunity."

3. Three days later, on the Feast of All Saints, a Friday of the Sacred Heart, at 6 o'clock in the morning, Coassini, as prefect, is given the honor of saying the community Mass, *i.e.*, the Mass at which all the inmates of the house who are not priests receive Communion. He wears a splendid chasuble, but he

does not notice it, nor the decorations of church and altar. "*Magnificat!*" His heart is jubilant. It is his First Mass. He has said the *mea culpa*, and now raises his voice: "Glory be to God in the highest and peace to men on earth"—blessings which were to be fostered by his future sacrifices. With great fervor he recites all the prescribed prayers and raises the sacrificial offerings.

The solemn moment of consecration arrives. Once more his fingers glide over the snow-white corporal, he grasps the Sacred Host, and raises the golden chalice. With indescribable devotion does he perform this divine work; every movement he makes is a sensible prayer.

His eyes rest on the sacrifice which lies before him while he presents the petitions of the "Our Father" to the present, but concealed Redeemer. A few more prayers and he reposes on the heart of his Saviour. First Holy Communion from his own hand on the day of the Sacred Heart! What joy, what exultation! He can now give the Bread of Life to his fellow-students —how earnestly has he prayed for every one of them! Finally, at the end of the celebration, the newly ordained priest bestows his sacerdotal blessing from the altar.

It is a low Mass, yet he is privileged to end it with a solemnity which could not have been more appropriately planned. It is the Friday of the Sacred Heart, and Coassini recites the formula of consecration of the

whole community to the Sacred Heart. After having let the incense of respect ascend to the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar, he prays, and the whole community with him: "Sweetest Jesus, Source of love, Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, Thou who didst unlock the inexpressible treasures of Thy heart to us. . . ." What a faithful expression of his own sentiments! Then for the first time he takes the Blessed Eucharist and blesses his companions. After leaving the altar he again converses undisturbed with the Saviour for a long, long time.

No relatives appeared for the special breakfast and therefore the conversation could turn about the mysteries of the feast. The young priest is very cautious with his words, which do not show too much of his interior emotion. But his appearance, conduct, and words all show that there is something unusual about this day.

Soon he goes to his room with the acolytes. He finds it beautifully decorated. A large relic stands on his priedieu, with candles on both sides, and a bouquet of flowers on the table. The candles are lit. Priests as well as altar boys, one after another, kneel before him to receive his blessing and to assure him of their good wishes.

The souvenir cards which he distributed among his friends were almost all representations of the Sacred Heart. This special devotion gave its impress to the entire day.

Among all the letters and telegrams which Coassini received on this day, we will cite only that of the venerable cathedral provost, Father Joseph Walter of Innichen, who was celebrating his silver jubilee on the same day:

"You made me very happy by sending me your souvenir cards. It is a sign of the true love by which all alumni of the Germanicum—however long they may have been away from their Alma Mater, however far they may be separated in the world, or no matter how many years may have elapsed since the day when they celebrated their First Mass in Rome—always remain united in heart and soul. It is a proof of the truly sacerdotal spirit which our Alma Mater implants in her sons. United by this bond of love, let us, on the Feast of All Saints, think of each other at the altar, so that it may always remain thus, until we are united with all the saints in eternal love in Heaven."

The feast derived special éclat from the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Billot, who was good enough to give a little speech suitable for the occasion. He attached his theme in an ingenious way to the souvenir card on which Blessed Robert Johnson was portrayed in the red cassock of the pupils of the Collegium Germanicum. In a letter to a former fellow-student in Paris, Coassini writes: "No doubt you were united with us in spirit on November 1. For you had before you our souvenir card, concerning

which Cardinal Billot gave us such a fine address! He distinguished three things on the picture: the red habit (*sacramentum tantum*), the rope about the neck of the beatified martyr (*res et sacramentum*), and the aureole (*res tantum*). You can imagine how beautifully he developed these thoughts."

The day closed with a celebration in honor of the Sacred Heart in the beautifully decorated Gregorian Hall. On a high throne, surrounded by a veritable forest of flowers and plants, stood a statue of the Sacred Heart radiating a brilliant light. The speech of the occasion, delivered by a student, was followed by poetical recitations, songs, and instrumental pieces by the orchestra. In the latter, owing to the lack of a substitute, Coassini once more played the first violin. With the song: "The Heart of Jesus is the heart of a priest," the celebration ended.

On the two succeeding days, according to a custom of the Germanicum, the newly-ordained priest said two more "First Masses"—one in the Crypt of St. Peter's Basilica, at the tomb of the Prince of Apostles, and the other on the altar of St. Ignatius in the Gesù Church.

Returning home on the third day he made the remark in his brief and decisive manner: "Now begins the danger of routine." We are all witnesses that he victoriously overcame this danger. His Masses were a continual *Gaudete in Domino* ("Rejoice in the

Lord"), words which the Church herself placed in his mouth in the beginning and at the end of his priestly career, namely, on the Feast of All Saints and on the third Sunday in Advent.

CHAPTER XXIII

COASSINI'S SEVEN WEEKS AS A PRIEST

1. The Blessing of the Holy Father.—2. Preparation for Mass.—3. Devotion and Edification during the Holy Sacrifice.—4. Thanksgiving and Joy.

1. Coassini was a priest for only seven weeks. But in a certain sense what is true of his whole life can also be said of his short sacerdotal career: "*Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.*" His days were full days before God. But who can describe them? One of his former prefects writes: "You desire a few lines for Coassini's biography. Dear Father, describe a violet with all its perfume and charm." Of the days of his priesthood we might perhaps say: let us describe the First Mass of an ardent client of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a good seminary, who had just sanctified himself anew by a ten-day retreat; let us present the perfume and charm of such a first offering; let him say his First Mass every day and pass his days in such a hallowed disposition,—then we shall have an appropriate picture of Coassini's happy days in the priesthood.

No remarkable events occurred during these seven weeks, except, perhaps, that Coassini, together with

the other newly ordained priests and their relatives, was granted an audience by the Holy Father. It is well known with what love and sincerity Pius X always received all the faithful, but especially children after their first Holy Communion, and young priests.

The Holy Father extended his hand to each of the newly-ordained priests and told them that he gladly blessed them, their studies and their work, their parents and all those for whom they came to ask his blessing; he added the humble request to remember him during the Holy Sacrifice. This simple and gracious reception strengthened Coassini's resolution to be ever faithful and devoted to the Holy See.

Rome presents many inviting opportunities for offering the Holy Sacrifice, in the Catacombs, in the great basilicas, or at the grave of some saint, and thus to combine the commemoration of the saint or the attractiveness of the place with one's private devotion. Coassini made little use of these opportunities. Perhaps it disturbed his private devotion too much to say Mass away from home. Only once did he go out, to take the place of another priest who had volunteered, but was prevented. It was on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, when he said Mass in S. Alfonso before the miraculous image of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven.

2. All his time was devoted to study, centering, as it were, around the Holy Sacrifice, which he offered

in the College church every morning. At first he said Mass at 5:30 o'clock, rising half an hour earlier; but when he was advised to spare himself because his health was not good, he said Mass at 6 o'clock, but spent the whole preceding hour in preparation. He was accustomed to prepare his intentions and mementos with meticulous care the evening before. He conscientiously noted all his stipends in a diary specially prepared for the purpose, so that in case of his sudden death, there would not be the slightest mistake. Besides this official account, if we may so call it, he also kept a little note-book in which he entered all the intentions, using one line for each day, writing first the date, then the first intention, and finally the second intention. Every morning before Mass he briefly reread the intentions which he had thus written down, so as, if possible, to remember everyone individually at the Memento. As a consequence, the Memento took considerable time in his Masses. When his attention was drawn to this, he contented himself with renewing in a general way the intentions he had made beforehand. The reasons for this meticulous care in even the smallest details were his high respect for the Holy Sacrifice and his firm conviction of the importance and efficacy of the prayers said by the priest during Mass.

With equal care he prepared himself for his daily meditation. From his notes we learn that his favorite subject of meditation was the Passion of Christ.

Again and again he asks himself the question: "How shall I repay the Lord for all He has done for me?" His first thought is: By a sincere contrition. "When, in the bitterness of my heart, I think of my sins, I should like to be nailed to the cross; I will sincerely repent having offended Jesus." Then he renews his firm purpose of amendment, because "he who sins, crucifies Christ anew, as it were, for he contemptuously rejects the whole supernatural treasure of grace obtained at the price of so much blood and labor." Of frequent occurrence is the ejaculation: "O Lord, I am not worthy." "I will often humiliate myself before God in my prayers. . . . I will guard against vain thoughts and imaginations. . . . How great is the goodness of the Lord, who became obedient unto death, who died between two robbers, in order to redeem them, and who also accepts my penance and makes me a servant at His feast and a companion at His table, when I offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

The gratitude, joy, and perfect resignation which are barely intimated in the last sentence, receive full expression in another passage: "Daily does the Lord offer Himself for me and for the whole world through my hands, concealing His power and revealing only His mercy. How could I ever forsake Jesus, from whom I have received such infinite benefits. . . . I will work for Him, suffer for Him, and seek only Him. . . . I will live chastely, celebrate the Holy Sacrifice

as devoutly as I can, and thereby please the Divine Heart."

A similar line of thought is expressed in the last note which he wrote, and which for this reason shall be quoted here in its entirety: "The Lord never complained, but bore His sufferings with great fortitude, and in the hour of His utter abandonment, when suffering the most acute torments, clothed His ardent desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls in the words: 'I thirst.' A holy desire urges Him to merit for us a superabundance of graces in all the circumstances of life. Animated by this same intention and desire, I, as a priest, will remain united with Christ throughout life, especially when I offer the Holy Sacrifice, and eschew all selfishness. I must cultivate especially devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in order that I may constantly offer the Holy Sacrifice more worthily. This I will learn from the Mother of Sorrows."

In his second-last note he speaks of the Mother of Sorrows as follows: "In His suffering on the cross, our Lord did not forget the duties of piety and, after having manifested the greatness of His mercy, He gave me the last treasure that remained to Him, His Mother, that she might be a true mother to me and support me in my sacred duties as a priest, even as she assisted St. John the Evangelist."

This passage gives us a deep insight into the ardor

of his heart. Like the rest of the students of the German College, Coassini made his daily meditation and preparation for Mass alone in his room. Had one observed him there, what would one have seen? Exactly what a fellow-student says of his attitude in prayer: "When engaged in prayer, he knelt motionless and seemed to be extraordinarily collected, yet his attitude was perfectly natural and in no wise odd." This responds perfectly to his resolution: "I will avoid whatever might seem unusual in my exterior bearing and strive after the greatest simplicity." His exterior bearing would only have indicated that he was unusually earnest when preparing for Mass. And no wonder! For years he had attended the Holy Sacrifice with great devotion, so as to be able one day to celebrate it worthily himself, as he writes: "Let us always seek to increase our devotion in hearing Mass, so that we may some day be able to offer the Holy Sacrifice worthily."

3. After such careful preparation—which he never permitted to be shortened—he approached the altar. And how did he celebrate the Holy Sacrifice? He had learned the proper method from Christ himself: "From Jesus I will learn to take a reverent posture and to pray ardently." During vacation he had often practiced the ceremonies and frequently asked a fellow-student to practice with him. With painful exactitude he observed the rubrics, and the

first few times, as when he learned to recite the Breviary, he inquired about the prescribed ceremonies in detail.

"To be entirely pleasing to God during Holy Mass, we must conscientiously observe the rubrics and regulate our private devotions by them. For those are wise rules made by Holy Church, who is the spouse of Christ."

At first he was hardly able to restrain his private devotion and required from thirty-five to forty minutes for a low Mass. But he gradually learned to control himself and overcame his difficulties without detriment to his piety. The following remark of a fellow-student indicates how great his ardor must have been: "What devotion and recollection he shows at the Holy Sacrifice! When he returned from the altar, his cheeks glowed. What may have been the cause?"

Another fellow-student describes Coassini's attitude at prayer, more particularly at holy Mass: "His was a profound, sincere, and unfeigned piety. I say sincere and unfeigned, for there was nothing hypocritical in it, dissimulation being entirely foreign to his character. Everyone gladly watched him at prayer because he prayed so naturally. He assumed no unusual position, nor did he turn his head from one side to another, nor change the expression of his face, but always remained entirely natural. He knelt in his pew like the others, with his hands simply

folded, his body slightly bent forward, his eyes lowered or fixed steadily on the altar: thus he could be seen praying in church. And yet what profound piety was veiled beneath this simple posture! This was noticeable especially when he said Mass." Devoutly he recited the prayers and performed the ceremonies prescribed by the Church. At the moment of Consecration he became completely wrapped up in the profound mystery. With the greatest recollection he slowly and solemnly pronounced the words of Consecration and reverently adored the Sacred Host, raised it, and then slowly laid it on the corporal. Whoever watched him could not but feel that an ineffable mystery was being accomplished. The celebrant was perfectly and clearly conscious of holding the Divine Redeemer in his hands and endeavored to treat Him with the greatest respect. The ordinarily so unassuming and reserved student displayed the grandeur of the priestly dignity whenever he stepped up to the altar. And yet there was nothing artificial or exaggerated in his piety. Everything was natural and spontaneous, and for this reason all eyes rested on him with unalloyed pleasure. His modesty and amiability made it a pleasure to converse with him. His firm, manly, and unfeigned fervor made him beloved at prayer. He aimed at nothing extraordinary, but did the ordinary things which the College offered and recommended to all its pupils with extraordinary zeal and exactitude to the very last day of his life, in spite

of the intense suffering which, as the doctors testified, must have racked his body for weeks before. And his last High Mass, which he sang on the Sunday before his sudden death, resembled his first in devotion and fervor."

This judgment shows that Coassini had succeeded in carrying out his oft-repeated resolution: "I will never make a show of piety, for that would be Pharisaical; but I will constantly strive to increase my interior devotion, even at the community exercises (Mass). In this way I can please God secretly."

4. From his thanksgiving after Mass we can also conclude how ardent was his devotion and how intimate his union with the Redeemer. He never shortened the fifteen-minute period recommended for thanksgiving. On the contrary, it was evident that he could not separate himself from the Saviour. Although devotion to the Sacred Heart followed his First Mass, and although he knew that the others were waiting for him, he remained in church for half an hour engaged in thanksgiving.

"I often wondered at Coassini's love of prayer," remarks a fellow-student. "He said his Mass at 6 o'clock, while I served another at 6:30 and made my thanksgiving for Holy Communion afterwards. But after I had finished my thanksgiving, Coassini was invariably still in church, wrapt in prayer." Some believed that he continued his thanksgiving in his room.

"I often had occasion to visit Coassini during study hours," says another fellow-student, "and frequently saw him rise from his priedieu."

During this whole period he practiced what he had once written in his journal: "The best way is to combine the active with the contemplative life, and the Lord has given me the grace of finding such a combination in my priestly calling. Hence I must order my life so that I remain recollected even in the midst of distractions and refer everything to God. This is extremely pleasing to Him. . . . I must also avoid undue haste in my work, yet never neglect the duties of my state for the sake of prayer." Here lay the greatest temptation for the zealous young priest. The energetic resolutions which he made on this head during his last monthly retreat (December 1st) indicate that he realized the danger. It may be stated without fear of contradiction that the Mass was the centre of his whole life—every day, forenoon and afternoon, work and prayer, all were a preparation for and a thanksgiving after the Holy Sacrifice.

Did this faithful servant possess the gift of contemplative prayer? and if so, what degree had he attained? We do not know, for his notes do not contain an answer to these questions. On one occasion he wrote: "Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him for the Transfiguration. He who wishes to taste spiritual consolations and heavenly joy, must have a firm

faith, avoid all, even the least, injustice, and courageously do good." Coassini accomplished this, but he does not say whether his Master took him along on the Mountain of the Transfiguration. He was soon to rise even higher.

CHAPTER XXIV

COASSINI'S ILLNESS AND DEATH

1. Beginning of his Illness.—2. Increasing Danger.—3. The Operation.—4. The Holy Viaticum.—5. Sympathy of the Holy Father.—6. His Last Will and Testament.—7. His Resignation.—8. His Last Night on Earth.—9. His Longing for Heaven.—10. His Death.—11. Expressions of Sympathy.

1. On Sunday, December 15th, the Octave of the Immaculate Conception, Coassini sang the Advent High Mass (*Gaudete*) in the College Church, held vespers in the afternoon, and in the evening practised on the violin with a few companions in preparation for Christmas. In the morning of the 16th his server waited for him in the sacristy at the appointed time (6 o'clock) and was very much surprised when, for the first time, he failed to appear with his usual punctuality. After a wait of ten minutes the boy asked the sacristan if he knew what was wrong with Coassini. Half joking, half in earnest, both thought that the Prefect had probably become so deeply engrossed in his meditation that he had not heard the bell. Finally it was decided to look for him. The server knocked at his door. In answer

to a loud "Come in," he entered the room and inadvertently fixed his first look on the priedieu, so firmly was he convinced that he would see Coassini there. But the Prefect was not there. He was lying in bed. As the server approached him, Coassini sat half upright and, without betraying any pain, apologized for having been unable to come. He said he suffered from pains in his stomach and would have to remain in bed for a while; it would soon pass over.

The infirmarian was advised immediately and the authorities were notified. Coassini had risen at the usual time that morning, but felt so weak that he had to lie down again. When found, he complained of severe pains in the abdomen and the expression of his face as well as half-suppressed groans told how intensely he was suffering. His whole body quivered with pain when anyone touched him. The house physician was immediately summoned by telephone and came at once. After a brief examination he advised the superiors to consult a good surgeon, for it was most probably a case of acute appendicitis.

Though Coassini never enjoyed perfect health, he had not been ill during his six years at the College. Only during the last two weeks he had made the impression of one suffering, so that the Health Prefect repeatedly asked him whether he was sick. Although he always answered that he was quite well, he was prevailed upon to sleep a little longer and to say his Mass half an hour later. By all kinds of little strata-

gems he tried to gain time for study and to deprive himself of sleep, but finally yielded and said Mass at six o'clock.

2. The surgeon, a well-known specialist who had successfully performed several operations in the College, decided to wait until the next morning, and hence Coassini, who had already endured so much during the day, had to continue to suffer through the long night.

He never betrayed the least impatience or dissatisfaction, but did pay his tribute to human weakness by groaning and whimpering when the pain, as he expressed himself, mounted to his breast. But in spite of these audible expressions of pain he united his sufferings with those of his Saviour and faithfully carried out what he had resolved four years previously while meditating on the Passion of Christ:

"How terrible are Christ's words: 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.' Thus the Saviour, who longed to accomplish the salvation of mankind, trembled. How much more, then, must we acknowledge our weakness and humiliate ourselves! God will strengthen us in proportion to our self-humiliation. But even in his excess of suffering does the Saviour pray that the divine will be done. So we also must be firm and patient. If we notice that to keep our good resolutions exceeds our strength, we must remain closely united to the will of God. Then the Lord will strengthen us, as He strengthened Jesus.

His sufferings did not pass away, but He received strength to bear them with resignation."

These and similar thoughts gave Coassini so much vigor that, in spite of his severe suffering, he still tried to look after all the little things which pertained to his office. When, during the hour of recreation, he heard the students converse in the yard, he remembered that he had something for them to read in his room and immediately asked that it be given to them. He told his fellow-prefect to consult his diary to see if nothing special was to be looked after during these days, so that the order of the house would not be disturbed on account of his illness. When this friend said to him: "You are really to be envied in your sufferings, for you now have a fine chance to become like the suffering Saviour," he simply answered, "Yes"; but a flicker of satisfaction passed over his face. These were his joys in the midst of severe suffering. And those who observed how resigned he was in his suffering, how joyful in spite of his sighs, and how peaceful and dignified despite his corporal misery, unconsciously applied to him what he had said of the suffering Christ: "What dignity and grandeur are displayed in the Passion of Christ! True dignity and greatness can not be taken away by even the greatest humiliation." His own bearing inspired such respect that some of the students came and asked to be permitted to make their meditation on their knees in his room, and one insisted on his

petition with such holy vehemence that he could hardly be got rid of.

At the same time, Coassini was grateful for every little favor and full of rare consideration for the attending priest, whom he seldom disturbed in his Breviary or meditation. Gladly would he have sent him to bed for the night, had he not known how useless such a request would be; yet he let it clearly appear that the presence of the priest freed him from a certain feeling of fear.

On Tuesday the doctors had him transferred to the infirmary. As they were not yet able to agree on the necessity of an operation, it was postponed to the following day. The symptoms pointed more clearly to appendicitis, and a thorough examination in the evening apparently settled the diagnosis beyond doubt.

At the same time it became apparent that the patient was in great danger, and his fellow-students, who were continually enquiring about his condition, took recourse to supernatural means, prayer and Holy Communion. All wanted to see him and exchange a few words with him, and the superiors were obliged to restrict this sympathetic manifestation of love, so as not to deprive the patient of the necessary rest.

The night was as peaceful as could be expected under the circumstances. In the morning Coassini asked to receive Holy Communion, and the priest who watched at his side, afraid that vomiting might set in

towards morning, brought him the Blessed Sacrament at a very early hour.

The pain diminished somewhat on the succeeding day, and Coassini placed his sufferings on the altar instead of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Hardly had he regained his self-control, when he began to meditate once more on the Passion of Christ.

"The Redeemer," he had written some time before, "precedes his Apostles to Jerusalem to embrace the cross. His example must strengthen me in patiently accepting the sufferings which God sends me. I will often recall the severe torments which Jesus endured for love of us and to atone for our sins, and ask Him to induct me into the mystery of His sufferings. . . . Our Divine Redeemer shows the greatest readiness to drink the cup of suffering. His priests share His chalice in a special way and must therefore drink from it with fortitude, *i.e.*, bear all pain with the greatest patience." He practiced what he had preached during his painful sickness.

When vomiting set in as a result of his condition, the doctors forbade him to take any nourishment. When Father Spiritual offered him a drink to quench his burning thirst and moisten his lips, Coassini asked if that were not against the doctor's orders. When reassured on that score, he took the refreshment, but immediately remarked: "Our Divine Redeemer did not drink when He was thirsty," and never again mentioned that he was thirsty. In fact he

never again spoke of his sufferings. Towards his superiors, attendants, and the doctors he was frank and open, drew attention to all the symptoms of his disease, recounted his early history, so that all means necessary to restore his health could be taken. He willingly submitted to all orders, whether pleasant or not.

Everybody remarked on his touching gratitude towards his superiors, doctors, and attendants, nay, even towards visitors and the servants who carried him from the second floor to the infirmary. On one occasion he sympathized with the Brother infirmarian for giving him so much trouble. When the Brother answered: "You have still more to suffer," he said: "Well, then we shall both profit by acquiring supernatural merits."

3. It soon became apparent that an operation was inevitable. When he was advised of this fact, he said: "God's will be done; I am ready for anything; do with me what you think best, I only wish to fulfill the will of God." When the infirmarian asked him whether he was afraid of an operation, he replied: "Oh, no, I have given myself entirely to God, and am ready to die, to continue to suffer or to get well, just as God wills." To the encouraging words of Father Minister: "All are constantly praying that you may soon become well again," he immediately added: "If that be God's holy will."

The operation was set for 3 o'clock Wednesday

afternoon. Since the College had the necessary installations, it was not necessary to transport the patient to a clinic; but he had to be carried back to the first story. Quietly he let them do what they pleased with him and thanked them for every little favor.

Meanwhile a special prayer hour was held before the Blessed Sacrament, in which the Fathers of the house and all the companions of Coassini without exception sent urgent petitions to Heaven for his recovery.

He did not wake up during the operation, nor did he give the least sign of pain or restlessness. The doctors found that he had a serious case of peritonitis besides appendicitis.

When Coassini regained consciousness, immediately after the operation, he asked: "Where am I? Is the operation over?" Asked whether he was suffering, he replied: "No, I am quite well." The pains seemed to have diminished, for during the whole evening he did not complain, in fact, did not speak at all.

4. Between 1 and 2 o'clock in the morning Coassini asked what the doctors had found. This was a good opportunity to prepare him for the worst: "Peritonitis," was the reply. "Is that a dangerous illness?" he queried. "Certainly not without danger in the condition you are in." "Then it may be dangerous, and I had better receive the last Sacraments." "There is no reason why you should not receive them."

"When can I receive them?" "The best time would be about 7 o'clock, immediately after Mass; when the students have received Holy Communion and offered it up for you, they will accompany the Saviour to your sick-room." At this news he became quiet for a moment; his cheeks colored slightly; he was surprised, for he had not seriously thought that there was danger of death, and his nature rebelled at the prospect. But after a few seconds of calm resignation he was able to say, from a sincere heart: "As God wills." And he immediately continued: "Father Spiritual, during vacation you showed us young candidates for the priesthood how to prepare the faithful for death and administer the last Sacraments to them; will you prepare me now?" He spent the time from 2 to 7 o'clock in preparing for Holy Communion, Confession, and Extreme Unction. All the prayers of the Church as well as the accompanying ceremonies were gone through, and it was edifying to see with what profound and pious understanding he made use of the means of grace thus offered to dispose his heart for eternity.

When the Brother prepared the table for Holy Communion, Coassini interrupted his devotions for a moment and watched him. Then he asked if that was an unworthy distraction, now that he was so soon to receive the holy Sacraments. A reassuring word sufficed to calm him, and in a second his thoughts were again fixed on Him whose arrival was imminent.

Shortly after, the little bell was heard in the hall, the door opened, and Father Rector entered with the Blessed Eucharist: "*Pax huic domui!* (Peace unto this house)." The young priests and students who accompanied him filled the room and overflowed into the hall, both wings of the door remaining open.

Several of the students wept, while Father Rector could only say the prayers in a half-suppressed voice.

After this solemn and consoling ceremony Coassini wished to make a long thanksgiving. Father Spiritual, after a few prayers, left him with the request that he rest a little and continue his thanksgiving afterwards. Coassini greeted him on his return by reminding him of his words, although more than an hour had passed in the meantime. When Father Rector told him that he had offered up the Mass for him, John asked what kind of a Mass it was. When told that it was the Mass *pro quacumque necessitate*, he appeared visibly satisfied, for this Mass seemed to correspond perfectly to his resignation to God's holy will.

The theologians have a beautiful painting in their recreation hall. It represents the gentle, generous Saviour with a picture of His Heart on His breast. From the wounds of the heart break rays of love and grace, and these, by means of His pierced hands, the Saviour directs, as it were, to the persons kneeling before Him. The picture indicates what Jesus does to

make good priests out of His young theologians. Coassini liked to pray and often sang a hymn before it after the evening recreation. On the day of his First Mass he had a beautiful bouquet of flowers placed before it. A large photograph of the painting was hung at the foot of his bed, so that he could fix his eyes on it without fatigue. He thanked heartily for the favor. The view of the picture facilitated union with Him whom he had received into his heart in the morning.

5. The students had already prayed much for their sick friend, but the administration of the last Sacraments had made them more fully aware of his danger and the need of supernatural help. What the doctors could not accomplish was now to be obtained from Heaven.

Blessed Peter Canisius had been godfather at the definitive foundation of the College and had been selected as the patron of its new chapel; to have him canonized one more miracle was needed. The doctors openly admitted that if Coassini were saved, it would be a miracle. In three days the anniversary of the Saint's death would be celebrated. Hence a triduum in his honor was quickly arranged. The pictures of the Saint in the halls of both philosophers and theologians were beautifully decorated and his statue was set up beside the main altar of the church. Besides the prayers, communions, and works of penance of individuals, every evening was to witness a general

devotion before the Blessed Sacrament. Others were interested and auxiliary forces raised for prayer, such as the professors and students of the University and of the Biblical Institute, where Coassini had studied the Oriental languages.

An appeal was made to the Holy Father, who welcomed the thought of saving a young priest from death through the intercession of Bl. Peter Canisius, promised his coöperation in the triduum, and sent Coassini his Apostolic Blessing and a medal, which on one side bore the image of a dove, a symbol of the Holy Ghost, who had but a short time before descended upon the young priest, with the legend: "They persevered in prayer with Mary"; and on the other side a picture of the Pope with the words: "Pius X. Pont. Max." The Holy Father was so good as to bless and touch this medal himself. We can imagine the joy of the whole community, and especially of the patient, when the delegation, accompanied by the Right Reverend Father Fonck, returned with the Apostolic Blessing and the medal. The confidence and sincerity of the prayers offered for Coassini were so great that after his death many assured us that they had thought Heaven would have to hear such persistent appeals because the object in view was so good, the ones who prayed were young priests or candidates for the priesthood with their superiors and the Holy Father, the patron was one who was already beatified and so dear to the College, and who by his

intercession and the honor given him could increase the glory of God. In our public prayers we had, of course, expressly added the condition that, above all, the adorable and inscrutable designs of Divine Providence might be fulfilled.

Coassini himself during his whole illness had been a shining light of patience, of submission to the will of God, and of intimate union with the Saviour. Now, after the reception of the Holy Viaticum, this appeared still more. One of his fellow-students writes: "I visited him the day after the terrible operation. He rested peacefully, as if nothing had happened. 'Do you suffer much?' I asked him.—'No, but I feel quite weak. . . . What incomparable strength the thought of the crucified Jesus gives to a Christian in such moments!' . . . . After a little while, I asked him if he felt perfectly tranquil. 'Certainly, I am at peace, for I received many graces from the Lord this morning in three Sacraments.' "

A fellow-student asked him whether it would not be hard for him to die so young. He answered in the words of patient Job, giving an almost solemn emphasis to every syllable: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so be it done: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

The picture of the Sacred Heart, the object of his special veneration, was still affixed to the foot of his bed; to his left, on a little table, lay the crucifix which he had received from the College when he said

his First Mass, and upon which, during his last audience with the Pope, he had requested and obtained the *toties quoties* indulgence for the hour of death. On a colored ribbon around his neck he wore a relic of St. Peter Canisius, as well as the medal which the Holy Father had sent him and the scapular medal. One could not help being edified when observing how devoutly he fixed his eyes on the picture of the Sacred Heart and recommended himself to it by repeating the prayer, *"Cor Jesu sacratissium, miserere nobis!* or grasped the crucifix, regarded it for a moment and kissed it fervently, uniting his sufferings with those of the crucified Saviour; or seized the reliquary and kissed and venerated the relic of St. Canisius with the words: "Blessed Peter Canisius, pray for me and, if it be God's holy will, restore me to health." He always added the clause, "if it be God's holy will."

6. Thus he prepared his soul for death. Nor did he forget his temporalities. He possessed considerable property, and had probably long been considering the question what to do with it. One day, after having kissed the crucifix, he regarded the picture of the Saviour hanging thereon and said: "My Saviour gave away everything for me, even His clothes. I have offered myself entirely to Him. I wish to be entirely His own in life and in death, and should like to do some good with my earthly possessions. My only sister has no children. I have provided for her, and would

like to give a good share of my property to the poor. Who will do this for me?" At the same time he looked enquiringly at the priest who attended him in his illness. When the Father directed him to the counsellor of his youth, who knew all the circumstances, Coassini answered: "Please ask him in my name to undertake the execution of my last will for the love of the Crucified Saviour."

Then he named certain relatives to whom he wished to leave legacies, and when asked how much, answered: "Better too much than too little." He named a round sum, finally adding: "The remainder I leave to the Saviour through the hands of Msgr. Trevisan." He was on the point of giving some more specific directions when his physician entered. Later his instructions were laid before him in writing. He reread the paper twice and then asked that three witnesses be called in to testify to the genuineness of his signature. When the witnesses came, he signed his last will and testament in their presence, putting the word "*sacerdos*" after his name, but not "doctor."

From this moment forward his temporal affairs were settled and he turned his face towards Heaven. When he was reminded what beautiful thoughts the Church offers her priests in the Compline, not only for the end of each day, but also for the end of life, he frequently repeated the main thoughts: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit!" "Protect us, O Lord, as Thine eyeball!" "Dismiss, O Lord, Thy

servant in peace!" "That we may watch with Christ and rest in peace!" "May Thy angels protect us in peace, and Thy blessing always remain with us!" "May the Almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect us!"

When repeating the words of the Saviour, "Into Thy hands," etc., he remarked: "For a priest's last will and testament there is, after all, no better model than the testament of our Divine Saviour. Christ could not ask for forgiveness, but He forgave all: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He forgets himself, and when near death, still thinks of others: 'This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' He disposes of all His possessions, even of His greatest treasure: 'Behold thy Mother.' He groans in pain, but in true priestly fashion does not complain to those who stand around, but to God: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' just as, with childlike confidence, He leaves all to Him as to his father: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!' "

7. In the afternoon of the same day Coassini insistently begged his attendant to thank his fellow-students for the love and kindness they had always shown him. He said he had been on good terms with all, not because he had satisfied all or treated them with special benevolence, but rather because they had always been indulgent towards him. He wished to beg pardon of all for the faults by which he had

given scandal, but in such a way that it did not appear to be an act of humility. He also declared that the Rector had always had too good an opinion of him in spite of the many mistakes he had made as prefect.

In the evening he allowed those who were with him to look deeply into his humble, childlike soul, so that they were highly edified. At the mention of his patron saint, John the Baptist, he uttered these beautiful words: "I love to venerate him because he said of the Saviour: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' "

8. The insistent request of the students for permission to watch with their sick fellow-student (hitherto the Fathers had taken turns in sitting up with him) was gratified to the extent that during the first half of the following night a young priest remained with him and the infirmarian.

Next morning, Coassini again desired to receive Holy Communion and the prefect of the philosopher's division made an early appeal for the privilege of giving the Bread of the Strong to his dying fellow-prefect. He selected representatives of the whole College, of the theologians and philosophers, of different years and nationalities: an Italian, a Hungarian, an Austrian, and a German, two theologians and two philosophers, to accompany him when he took the Blessed Sacrament to Coassini's room.

Coassini went once more to confession and then prepared for the holy Viaticum. After the table had

been arranged, priest and students knelt around the bed and recited the Litany of the Sacred Heart with him. Calmly and devoutly the dying priest received his Saviour for the last time on earth. When the prescribed ceremonies were over, the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus was recited as an act of thanksgiving and finally the priest gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Two students remained kneeling at the sick-bed, lost in devotion, whilst Coassini was still making acts of thanksgiving and love. After some time, the Father asked the two students to approach closer to the bed and asked Coassini to give them and all their fellow-students his sacerdotal blessing. This he did with visible joy. Extending both hands over the two who knelt before him, he solemnly said: "I bless you all, the theologians, the philosophers, the whole College and all our reverend superiors. *Benedictio Dei omnipotentis Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti descendat super vos et maneat semper vobiscum.*" ("May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, descend upon you and remain with you always.") Since the Apostolic Benediction and the indulgence for the hour of death had not yet been given him, this was done now. When the Father told him of it, he asked what he still had to do, and with the greatest resignation to the Divine Will, he once more offered his life to the Lord and devoutly invoked the Holy Name of Jesus.

About three o'clock in the morning he asked Father

Hilgers, who was watching with him, to call his spiritual director. When the latter entered, Coassini exclaimed: "I confessed my sins once more, nothing special, only . . . ," and although the priest interrupted him saying, "You need not tell me that," he would not depart from his rule to let his spiritual director "know everything, even in the hour of death"; and he did not stop until he had told him what he had confessed.

9. The doctor had given him a strong injection in the evening. Whether it was the effect of this stimulus or the last flaring up of life, he spoke on this morning with a freshness, clarity, and force which he was hardly accustomed to use when healthy. Repeatedly he commended his soul to God. At times he made acts of faith, hope, and charity; then again he would turn to the Mother of God, and—most frequently—to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Frequently he exclaimed: "Let the adorable will of God be done and praised forever in all things," and, as an echo, he would repeat with special emphasis, "*in all things.*" He became especially eloquent when he began to speak of the privilege of having been a student of the Collegium Germanicum, of having been raised to the priesthood, and of having received such abundant graces through the holy Sacraments in the course of his illness. From the fervor with which he constantly kissed his crucifix it could be seen how sincere he was in all these protestations.

Once, in kissing the medal which the Pope had sent him, he said: "The Holy Father sent this medal with his special blessing to me, an unknown young priest. He prays for me, nay, perhaps even offers up a portion of the holy Mass for me. How did I deserve that honor? I will gladly become well and work for holy Church, but I am equally glad to offer my life for the Church of God, if He wills it." Then he asked about the indulgences which he could gain in the hour of death. He showed a remarkable surety and conviction in applying the theological teachings of the effects of the Sacraments and indulgences to his last hour. He showed no fear of eternal punishment, but, on the contrary, simply and with childlike confidence abandoned himself to the merciful Saviour.

He clearly showed that his mind was occupied with the thought whether he would have to suffer for a long time in Purgatory. He asked if a person who repents of his sins with all his heart and then faithfully fulfills the conditions of a plenary indulgence, would go immediately to Heaven? He also asked that, when offering the Holy Sacrifice for him after his death, his fellow-priests might not forget that, as members of the Society of St. Boniface, they could say Mass for him at a privileged altar.

His favorite subject was Heaven. He talked about if for an hour on this occasion, as peacefully, joyfully, and naturally as if he were speaking of his loved ones at home. First he thought of the priests and

acquaintances who had died on the place where his own deathbed stood—of Fathers Beringer, Scarpa, Flöck, and Biermann—asked how they had died and wished an equally happy death for himself. Then he thought of his deceased fellow-students and pictured to himself a *conventum* [1] of all the alumni of the Collegium Germanicum in Heaven, under the presidency of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Once, while he devoutly pressed the relic of St. Peter Canisius to his lips, and exclaimed, "Blessed Peter Canisius, pray for me!" someone again remarked: "We confidently hope he will cure you by his intercession, so that he may be canonized. But if you should die, tell Bl. Peter in Heaven that our confidence in him is unshaken, though we cannot understand why even after his death he should be so humble and do so little for his own glorification." Coassini opened his eyes wide and with that rare naïveté which characterized him said: "When we get up there, we shall probably look at everything with different eyes. Whatever God does, is best; let His holy will be done!"

During all these prayers and conversations his voice was clear and loud and he did not seem to tire at all. When he was advised to rest a little and to

[1] During the autumn vacation the students from different countries attending the German College meet on a certain day to exchange reminiscences and mutually to encourage themselves, especially in their devotion to the Sacred Heart. This is called *conventum.*

spare his energy, he would obey for the nonce, but soon again give vent to the pious sentiments that filled his heart.

10. His hands gradually began to get cold and perspiration settled on his brow. When the infirmarian got ready to give him another injection and, feeling that his hands were cold, asked if it was of any use, Coassini immediately caught the significance of the question and enquired when he would die. As his strength was still great, and there appeared no certain signs of impending death, the Brother answered: "If Blessed Peter Canisius works no miracle, you may perhaps die tomorrow," and then immediately directed the patient's thoughts to Heaven with the remark: "What joy it will be to meet your good mother glorified in Heaven! She will surely await her John at the gate of Heaven and lead him to the Sacred Heart and the Heavenly Queen." Here his exceptional love for his father once more asserted itself. He fixed his eyes questioningly on Father Spiritual and with keen interest and sympathy said: "Surely, my father will be there also?" The love of God had ennobled and strengthened his love for his parents.

He was to be reunited with his parents sooner than he expected. When his spiritual director went to say Mass at 6 o'clock, he announced to the Rector: "Coassini's hands are turning cold, but he has too much

strength left to die forthwith; he will probably have a hard struggle." Because Coassini loved to pray and it took so much of his strength to talk, Father Hilgers shortly after 6 o'clock began to recite the prayers for the dying. The patient followed with great devotion and attention. In this last hour he was closely united with the suffering Redeemer in mind and heart. It was Friday morning, and he asked: "What time is it?" He was told the time and continued: "Now the Redeemer is being mocked in the Court of Pilate," and thus he followed Christ in His sufferings.

A little after 7 o'clock, Father Spiritual returned from holy Mass, and to the question: "How are you?", Coassini answered in a loud voice: "I am not dying yet, I am still strong." Father Rector entered the room. just then, and Father Spiritual left again, after renewing his promise to Coassini that he would be present at his death. He almost failed to keep this promise, for hardly had he reached his room, when he was hurriedly summoned back. On entering the sick-room, he immediately saw that Coassini was on the verge of death and therefore called in all the students.

"O Father Rector," Coassini had meanwhile exclaimed, "please tell them all how good God has been to me." Soon after, he repeated the cry of pure joy: "How good God is!" No words from his mouth during his last night sounded so joyful as these. A renewed

spasm of vomiting suddenly brought on the crisis. The students had not yet all assembled, when Coassini's eyes opened wide, as though he had something yet to tell, and while Father Rector with Father Hilgers recited the invocation: "Jesus, I live for Thee; Jesus, I die for Thee; Jesus, may I be Thine in life and in death," and the prayer, "*Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, Amen,*" he gave back his soul to His Creator. He had resolved when beginning his life at the College: "Mary is the Mother of grace; let us often ask her for her intercession, so that she may assist us in the hour of death." He had always faithfully kept this resolution and therefore was now able to die peacefully with her assistance.

At the last moment he once more received absolution. When he was already believed to be dead, he drew one more deep breath—it was the last.

Whoever witnessed the scene of his departure will never forget it. The dying priest was lying peacefully on his couch, his folded hands embraced the crucifix, Father Rector stood at his right, Father Hilgers at his left; Father Spiritual was reciting the *Commendatio animae,* round about crowded the students, some standing, others kneeling, while still others had to be content with a place in the corridor. Since it was only about half-past seven in the morning, and no one had yet left for the University, it can

be said that Coassini literally died in the midst of his fellow-students.

The Church's prayers for the dying, which are so striking in themselves, at such moments receive an incredible dignity and force and penetrate to the very marrow of the soul. "*Proficiscere* . . . set forth, Christian soul, from this world. . . . Let your dwelling place this day be in holy Sion. . . . Let the Lord rise up, and His enemies will be dispersed." Satan seems to have made no attempt to harass Coassini during the whole time of his illness and death; everything rather seemed to remind one of the prayer: "May the glorious choir of angels approach you." All were firmly convinced that this prayer would soon be fulfilled, as well as that other: "Having been received into the choir of the blessed, may you enjoy forever the chalice of the beatific vision!"

When Coassini's soul had left its earthly habitation, Father Rector knelt down beside the corpse and pronounced the last words of the ritual: "Help him, ye angels of God; hurry to meet him, angels of the Lord; receive his soul and lead it before the face of the Most High. Grant him eternal rest, O Lord." Then he arose and, with tears in his eyes, said to the students who still knelt there: "A saint has just passed away!"

All were deeply moved; some wept, not so much because of the pain of separation, as because they

had been privileged to witness such a beautiful death.

11. Soon after all went to the church to recite the Office of the Dead. The bier of the beloved Prefect was decorated with simple green, and several of the students took turns in acting as a guard of honor, while others came to pray. Students from other colleges as well as professors from the University and the Biblical Institute also appeared to sprinkle his corpse with holy water and to recommend his soul to God. Peacefully the dead priest in his red cassock and adorned with the stole rested before the crucifix, and one could hear, both from students and from strangers, such expressions as this: "I cannot pray *for* him, but unconsciously pray *to* him!"

After a solemn requiem mass in the College Church, on Saturday, December 21, Coassini's corpse was taken to the German Cemetery near St. Peter's Basilica. There, surrounded by his companions, in the shadow of St. Peter's and in close proximity to the glorious tomb of the Prince of Apostles, Coassini found his last resting-place. He could not have wished for a better funeral. The priests who had been ordained with him only a short time before carried him to the grave, the College choir sang a dirge for him, and just as Father Rector had given the blessing, the big bell of St. Peter's sounded the Angelus, followed immediately after by a hundred others from other churches. It was his funeral knell, a last com-

mendation of his soul to the Mother of God, on whose day his body was returned to the earth, just as, on the day of the Sacred Heart, he had surrendered his soul into the hands of his Saviour.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!

CHAPTER XXV

SYMPATHY AND APPRECIATION

1. Judgment of Outsiders.—2. Esteem of Companions. —3. Praise from the Holy Father.—4. Appreciation of Coassini's Qualities of Character.

1. Coassini's sudden death not only made a profound impression at the German College and among the members of his family, but letters of condolence and sympathy poured in from former students as well as from many persons who had met him but rarely. Thus, the Provincial of the Venetian Province of the Society of Jesus. Fr. Alberti, wrote to Father Cassiani: "The unexpected news of the death of that splendid alumnus of the German College, Coassini, stirred my very soul. Ever since I had made his acquaintance during a chance visit to Cavaliere Doljak in Gorizia, I retained the most agreeable remembrance of him, and even when far from Rome, I often thought of him with love and admiration. . . . Though young, he was ripe for Heaven! Happy youth! He is already enjoying the reward of his virtue."

His sister cherished a true veneration for him. Im-

mediately after his death she wrote: "I am grateful to you, Reverend Father Rector, for your friendly letter with the details of the illness and death of my saintly brother, as well as for his photograph, which I venerate like that of a saint, kiss every day as I pray to my blessed brother, and moisten with hot tears of sorrow. . . . It surely is hard to have lost such a good, saintly brother! Poor John, how happy was your death!"

Similar grief, united with great reverence for the departed, is revealed in a letter from his brother-in-law, Major Wenighofer, to Father Procurator. He writes: "Though the heroic death of this pious and devout priest must awaken admiration and envy, it nevertheless is and will remain an extremely bitter blow to my poor wife and myself, one which only time can soften. . . . Before I had received your sympathetic message it pained me that John had not selected the paternal tomb in his native land as his last resting-place, where we sometimes in silent devotion would remember him and all our other loved ones who repose there. But now I am satisfied . . . a saint does not belong among ordinary mortals."

His home paper (*L'Eco del Litorale,* December 24, 1912) said in the course of a long obituary notice: "In his birthplace, Gradisca, the sad news of Coassini's death made a deep impression. Expressions of sympathy and lamentations were audible everywhere. The ways of God are inscrutable! Many

were reminded of this text from Holy Scripture: 'Real old age is an immaculate life.' The Lord has taken him away because, though young, he was ripe for Heaven. Not that age is worthy of veneration which is based on number of years, but rather that which possesses sanctity in place of grey hair and innocence instead of longevity. It is said of St. Aloysius that he ended life's journey prematurely, yet filled many years. John Coassini's years also were few . . . but deep down in our hearts we feel that, instead of years, grace, innocence, and sanctity adorned him. May this thought console us and soothe the inexpressible sorrow of his relatives and may it be a stimulus to virtue for his fellow-citizens, his friends and acquaintances."

2. His fellow-students, who had lived in intimate daily relationship with him for years and were well able to distinguish real gold from dross, also regarded him as a saint. A student who wrote in this sense to an alumnus, received the following answer: "I, too, always regarded Coassini as a saint and learned much from him. 'Draw us and we will hurry after thee.' Often I wish that I could pray like him! In spite of his extraordinary talents, he was very modest."

Another priest, who had spent five years with John in the German College and had returned to his native land a year before his death, wrote: "Surely, we are justified in saying: God has taken our dear

brother John to Heaven because he was too good for this earth. I believe that all who were so fortunate as to have been with him at the Germanicum, and who became more intimately acquainted with him, at one time or another said to themselves: Would that I were like him! If I were asked: Did you hear or see anything in him which did not edify you? I would have to answer: No. I said Mass for him the very next day, but unconsciously prayed *to* him rather than *for* him."

Still more forcibly does a Tyrolese clergyman, likewise a former student of the College, express himself: "Well, the Collegium Germanicum has another saint *in spe*. Let us hope that our dear departed John is not quite as modest in Heaven as he was here on earth and that he will soon work miracles." A South German alumnus wrote after reading this biography in manuscript: "This book is a spiritual souvenir for [illegible] all, an exhortation to the devout life, made interesting by the presentation of an inspiring and eminent [illegible] example."

In the Ger[illegible]ege the conversation for a long time always returned to Coassini. Some took him for a model, whi[illegible] others prayed to him. Wherever one went, one was questioned about Coassini, and the edification and inspiration caused by his death was lasting.

3. The Most Rev. Father General of the Society of Jesus publicly bore witness in a letter to Rev.

Father Rector: "The death of that noble youth, John Coassini, seems to have given the students a fresh incentive to virtue: so exalted was the ideal of sanctity which he left behind, and so great the desire for perfection which he awakened."

The Holy Father, Pius X, who had remembered him in his illness, did not forget him after death. The day after Coassini's demise the following card reached the College:

"Vatican, December 21st, 1912.

Msgr. John Bressan, private secretary of His Holiness, sends greetings to the Reverend Father Rector of the Collegium Germanicum and advises him that the Holy Father has prayed for the eternal repose of that dear and excellent departed priest, John Coassini, that he expresses his sympathy to the College and for their strengthening bestows his Apostolic Blessing upon all, superiors and students."

Soon after New Year, on January 13th, 1913, the Holy Father, in a private audience granted to the students of the German College and their superiors, again referred to the deceased Coassini and said: "Together with you, I have lately mourned and wept for that splendid young man who won the admiration of all and prepared himself for his apostolic work with such fiery enthusiasm. The Lord called him away—he was ready for Paradise—to give him in advance the glory which he strove to merit."

4. In the beginning of May there appeared an

Italian biography of Coassini,[1] which found a ready market and was read especially in seminaries and by seminarists. One seminary ordered fifty copies at once. The rector of a Sicilian seminary ordered ten copies and wrote after receiving them: "I read this splendid book at one session; please send me ten more copies at once."

The universal esteem in which the departed was held thus received a forcible impetus. Not only his former fellow-students expressed their gratitude for these expressions of deep appreciation, but men in high positions pointed to him as a model for seminarists and young priests.

Thus the rector of a large German seminary, after having characterized the book as "the portrait of a saint," wrote: "This model is of especial use to me as rector of a seminary, hence I will not only read it, but carefully meditate upon it." Another seminary rector wrote: "For me, this little book is really a school. It is long since anything made such a strong impression upon me as this book, written with so much love and sympathy."

High ecclesiastical dignitaries expressed themselves similarly. A Cardinal who had read the biography of Coassini remarked that His Holiness, Pius X, was also reading it with genuine edification.

On June 20th, the eve before the feast of St. Aloy-

[1] *Un Seminarista Modello dei nostri Giorni: Giovanni Battista Coassini.* Rome, 1913, V + 249 pp. 16 mo.

sius, the closing services, according to custom, were held in S. Ignazio, at the tomb of St. Aloysius. The preacher of the occasion, Father Turchi, then provincial of the Roman province of the Society of Jesus, painted a model seminarian according to the example of St. Aloysius and repeatedly referred to John Coassini as one who had learned from Aloysius how to be a model for others.

Some of his fellow-students celebrated his memory in verse.

CHAPTER XXVI

A CHARACTER SKETCH OF COASSINI

1. His External Appearance.—2. Leading Traits of Character.—3. Conclusion.

1. If we survey the life of John Coassini, as here portrayed, the question comes to mind: Whence the esteem and love which he won for himself in an increasing measure from year to year, and which, after death, turned into veneration? Wherein lay his greatness?

Did his reputation, perhaps, precede him to the German College? True, Coassini came of a good family, had fine testimonials of conduct and scholarship, had earnestly fought for his vocation; but in all this there were others who were equal or even superior to him, yet nobody paid particular attention to them.

Was it his stately figure which attracted people? We cannot deny that he had an attractive, nay, imposing personality. He was of medium height, had a broad and noble forehead, clear, keen eyes, red cheeks, and a straight, natural posture. He dressed simply, but neatly. Thus he may have made a slight

impression on account of these natural advantages. But when we associate daily with a person, we are not easily deceived by exterior appearances; it must have been something far different which unconsciously attracted all hearts to Coassini.

Was it perhaps his talent and fine scholarship which impressed others? He was a brilliant speaker, and students as well as professors honored him as one of the most capable and most learned students of the Germanicum. But he was not an extraordinary phenomenon. His greatness was the result of persevering and serious application, not of innate genius.

Or did perhaps some extraordinary piece of work bring him reputation and esteem? Coassini was no Thomas Aquinas, no Newton, no Francis Xavier, no Dom Bosco. He hardly ever crossed the threshold of the seminary. True, he successfully and satisfactorily introduced the newcomers, effectively and profitably taught the children in Sunday School, capably managed the whole school as director, and presided with credit over the theological division; but many another student did all this before him without making such a deep impression. Where, then, lay the secret of his greatness?

2. In the beatification process of the Jesuit scholastic John Berchmans, who was elevated to the altar in 1888, the famous canonist Lambertini, later Pope Benedict XIV, in proving the heroic degree of the youth's virtue, established this principle:

"Heroism in virtue lies not so much in individual (even though numerous) eminent acts of virtue, as in the constant and long continued performance of virtuous daily actions." This thought, better than any other, explains the life of Coassini. The only traits of his life that might possibly, in a sense, be regarded as extraordinary, are his choice of vocation in spite of strong opposition, his firmness during the renewal of the combat despite the violence of the attack, and his perfect resignation to God's holy will at his father's death. Whether God granted him unusual gifts of grace in prayer, we can only conjecture. For the rest, his manner of life was like that of the other students of the Germanicum. Like them, he formed his ideal of the priesthood after the exalted model of Jesus Christ, but his eyes were keener in discovering the fine points, his hands surer and steadier in carrying them out. The foundation is laid upon an active life of faith (*iustus ex fide vivit*) and high enthusiasm for the holy Catholic Church. From this enthusiasm, rooted in living faith, and becoming stronger every year, sprang that grand conception of his aim and purpose and that unusual dedication to his vocation which he displayed at all times. No difficulties were able to shake them, the daily routine could not drown them; ever more clearly, ever more consistently, appears the resolution: "I will become a holy priest." Quietly but with an iron will he works at its execution.

Upon entering the Germanicum, he makes the eight-day retreat according to custom and repeats it every year; he cleanses his heart from sin and with his own hand draws the plan for the structure of perfection which he hopes to attain. Faithfully and firmly he keeps the resolution to sin no more. True, we find imperfections in his notes—even the just man falls seven times a day—but the severest censor can find no sins during the six years of his course at the College.

In erecting the structure of perfection, how clear his plans, how exact his questions! Every day in the examination of conscience, every month during the mensual retreat, he carefully examines every stone that is to be used in building. It is significant of his firmness and fidelity that, during these entire six years, his notes about the monthly retreats are never omitted. At times he has to restrain his zeal: "I must guard against the exaggerated desire of doing everything that is recommended to me. It is better sometimes humbly to acknowledge one's incapacity and be content with doing one's duty." God's will alone governs his conduct, and no purely human considerations have any influence upon his actions: "I will be careful not to let myself be influenced by the presence of others to do something more quickly or better. Does not the presence of God suffice? Shall I lightly esteem the fact that I can work for my Lord,

who became man and sacrificed Himself wholly for me?"

The battle begins. Temptation endeavors to shake the pillars of faith and vocation on which everything rests. Unusual conditions create dangers for him. Not for a moment does he cease to apply all those means which lead to victory. He prays, works, does not become morose, but frequently visits his spiritual director, even writes to his former director, whom he esteems very highly and who understands his condition better, and with the words of the Saviour as it were overcomes the temptation: "It is written, you shall serve God alone."

He is well talented for study, but progress demands continued diligence, good use of every favorable opportunity, and wise restraint. Thus he conscientiously studies philosophy as well as theology, in class as well as during vacation, thereby earning the respect of his fellow-students and professors, whereas interiorly a pure intention renders all his labors fruitful before God.

He is sent out to teach little children. He has no exceptional skill for this sort of work, but takes it up as Jesus did, practices, studies, watches others, asks for advice, and behold, soon he has reached the stage where, at the election of a new director for the Sunday School, he is unanimously chosen and fulfills all expectations. At once he becomes such an exemplary

director that the new pupils are entrusted to him for their initial training. The confidence he enjoys on the part of both students and professors increases with each succeeding year. All show him the greatest respect and love, the most important duties are entrusted to him, and he discharges them satisfactorily.

Was this a natural endowment with him? Did it flow from the good qualities of his character? He once said of himself: "My temperament is probably a mixture of the choleric with the melancholic, and hence a happy one." But it was not his good character alone which enabled him to reach the point where he could overcome even the smallest imperfections; it took years of earnest struggle, as he himself writes: "The melancholic trait in my character sometimes incites me to choose a thing merely because it is pleasant. With a firm will, and with my true aim before me, I must oppose this weakness."

Preliminary conditions were favorable in his case, but it required faithful and uninterrupted coöperation to complete the work. He kept his heart pure and innocent and ever had his eye fixed on God and duty. His delicate and noble conscience, sharpened by prolonged practice, quickly warned him against every imperfection and urged him to do good. His firm and upright will had perfect control of his life. Thus every act of amiability, of generosity, of humility, of obedience, although quite natural with him, was a

choice pearl of supernatural virtue, pure and refined gold of the deliberative will and of the grace acquired by persevering prayer. He did not let his efforts at acquiring virtue appear outwardly, yet all his actions proceeded from virtue, as was apparent to every attentive observer. In his studies as in his prayers, during the school year as in vacation, in important as well as in small affairs, his consistency is ever apparent.

Before the eyes of all, he had developed into a firm, delicate, and splendid character. His life was a model of what we can all acquire by the ordinary means of prayer—self-command and strict fidelity to duty. But one could see still more in him. At Coassini's death, Father Rector (Müller) expressed what all thought of him when he said: "A saint has just died." His example shows that even in the twentieth century it is possible to become a saint, by the use of means which are at the disposal of all.

3. Coassini died shortly before Christmas, but the celebration of the beautiful feast did not suffer much thereby. His death gave a more earnest and more profound significance to the church services. The worldly celebration was restricted to the members of the house, and the thought that their deceased companion was celebrating with them in spirit pervaded the whole community. Just as Coassini, shortly before his death, had talked of a reunion of all the alumni of the Germanicum in Heaven, with the two beatified martyrs

at the head and the Blessed Virgin as president, so his companions spoke of him as one who had left the College to begin the journey to his true home and whom they now remembered with love and affection. His life, like his death, edify and encourage them to the present day.

INDEX

Acolyte, 52 sq.
Aloysius, St., 29, 41, 56, 107, 108, 111 sqq., 156, 171, 174
Amiability, 100

Benedict XIV, 272
Billot, Cardinal, 147 sq., 223
Birth, 1
Breviary, 90, 177 sqq.
Bucceroni, J., 147

Canisius, Peter, St., 247 sqq., 257, 258
Carnival, 35 sq.
Cassock, Red, 10
Catechist, 63 sqq., 157 sqq.
Character, Training, 19 sqq.; Sketch of J. C., 271 sqq.
Charity, Practice of fraternal, 55 sqq., 84 sq., 95 sq.
Chastity, Vow of, 167, 169 sqq.
Christmas, 36
Classical studies, 4 sqq.
Collegium Germanico-Hungaricum, 7 sqq.; A day in the, 72 sqq.
Communion, First, 3; Frequent, 79 sqq.
Confession, First, 3
Conscience, Examination of, 91, sq.
Correspondence, 93 sq.
Crisinus, Bl. Marcus, 30, 115 sq.

Death, 20, 259 sqq.
Devotions, Favorite, 120 sqq., 210
Diaconate, 182 sqq.
Disputations, Public, 17 sq., 55
Doctorate, 18
Doubts about the faith, 43 sqq.
"Ductor," 56 sqq.

Endrici, Bishop, 34, 63
Epiphany, 37
Examinations, 150
Example, Good, 50 sq., 58
Fallize, Msgr., 32 sq.
Family, Love of, 104 sq.
Faith, Doubts about the, 43 sqq.
Father's opposition to John's priestly vocation, 41 sqq.; His death, 105 sqq.
Francis Xavier, St., 116 sq.
Frühwirth, Msgr. A., 32

Genazzano, 134
"Great Silence," The, 89

Hofbauer, Bl. Clement M., 31
Humility, 209
Humor, Sense of, 16 sq.

Ignatius, St., 113 sqq.
Illness, 237 sqq.
Independence of mind, 146
Instruction, Religious, 67 sq.

John Berchmans, St., 110 sq., 174, 183 sq., 185 sq., 272
John the Baptist, St., 117 sq.
John the Evangelist, St., 118
Johnson, Bl. Robert, 116, 201 sq.
Joseph, St., 119

Last will and testament, 250 sq.
Lectures, Attendance at, 16, 146

Loyalty to the Pope, 145
"Lumina," 78 sq.

Majláth, Bishop, 163, 165
Mary, B. V., Devotion to, 77, 78, 120 sq., 127 sqq., 230
Mass, 79, 221 sq., 228, 231 sq.
May excursions, 101 sq.
Meditation, 81 sq., 90, 228 sqq.
Melancholy, 85
Minor Orders, 47 sqq.
Mission Feast, 37
Modesty, 27, 68
Moral theology, 146 sq.
Mortification, 172 sqq.
Mother, 1 sqq.
Music, 11, 36, 102 sq.

Nagl, Cardinal, 34
Neatness, 82
Note-book, 82

Obedience, 198
Operation, 243 sq.

Parents, 1 sq.
Pariola, 100
Particular examen, 91 sq.
Pastor, Ludwig von, 33
Pastore, St., vacations at, 131 sqq.
Philosophy, Study of, 14 sqq., 154
Pius X, Audiences with, 12 sq., 25 sq.; On seminaries, 15; Blessing of, 165 sq., 248, 256; Expression of sympathy, 268; Edified by C.'s *Life*, 269
Plan of studies, 25 sq.
Prayer, 6, 24, 74 sq., 87, 142, 151, 177 sqq., 199, 211 sqq., 231, 234
Prefect of the theologians, 191 sqq.
Priesthood, Ideal of, 21 sqq.; Esteem for, 47 sq.; Immediate preparation for, 201 sqq.; Dignity of, 203; Reflections on, 203 sqq.; Ordination to, 216 sqq.; Seven weeks in the, 226 sqq.
Psalms, 17
Punctuality, 82

Recreation, 84, 96, 99
Respighi, Cardinal, 218
Retreats, 19 sq.
Rhetoric, 152
Rome, 8 sqq., 28 sqq.
Rosary, 86 sq., 128 sq.
Rules, 58 sq.

Saba, St., Villa of, 93, 96 sqq.
"Sabbatina," 147
Sabinum, 140
Sacred Heart Academy, 153 sq.
Sacred Heart, Devotion to, 89, 120, 121 sqq., 195
Saints, Devotion to, 108 sqq.
Sanctity, Striving after, 183 sqq.
Scripture, Study of Sacred, 148 sq.
Scruples, 214
Self-discipline, 175 sqq., 213
Seminary life, 8 sqq.
Sermons, 152 sq.
Silence, 59
"Social Circle," 155
Spiritual reading, 86
Stanislaus Kostka, St., 108 sqq.
Steinhuber, Cardinal, 9, 11 sq., 32, 34, 35, 97
Studies, 25 sq.
Subdiaconate, 167 sqq.
Sunday School in the Collegium Germanicum, 63 sqq., 93, 157 sqq.
Sympathy, Messages of, 264 sqq.

Tact, Sacerdotal, 50
Teacher, Qualifications as a, 70
Temptations, 51 sq., 207
Theatrical performances, 35
Theology, Study of, 141 sqq.
Tonsure, 47
Trials, 104 sqq.
Tusculum, 139

Vacation, 131 sqq.
Vanity, 208
Vannutelli, Cardinal V., 37, 137, 138, 139
Viaticum, 254
Virtue, Heroic, 273
Visits to the Bl. Sacrament, 87 sq., 211
Vocation, 6 sq., 39 sqq.

Wenighofer, Major, 104, 265
Wernz, Father, 12, 14, 267
Wilpert, Msgr. J., 33

17089